# SERMONS

ON

# DIFFERENT SUBJECTS,

By the Rev. JOHN HEWLETT,

OF MAGD. COLL. CAMBRIDGE, AND LECTURER OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF ST. VEDAST, FOSTER-LANE, AND ST. MICHAEL LE QUERNE.

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M DCC LXXXVI.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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SERMON IV.

JOHN iv. 24.

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SERMON V.

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SER-

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*Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Phariſee, and the other a Publican.*

*The Phariſee ſtood and prayed thus with himſelf, God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjuſt, adulterers, or even as this Publican.*

*I faſt twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I poſſeſs.*

*And the Publican ſtanding afar off, would not lift up ſo much as his eyes unto heaven, but ſmote upon his breaſt, ſaying, God be merciful to me a ſinner.*

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SER-

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ERRATA.

P. 124, l. 6, from bottom, for *perſuſion*, read *perſuaſion*.
P. 193, l. 4, dele *own*.
P. 224, l. 5, dele *ourſelves*.

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# SERMON I.

DEUT. iv. 9.

*Only take heed to thyſelf, and keep thy ſoul diligently, leſt thou forget the things which thine eyes have ſeen, and leſt they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life.*

THE great ſource of all human knowledge is experience; and that experience which teaches us practical wiſdom, and informs us of the many evils that conſtantly wait on life, is acquired chiefly by obſervation and reflection. Time, indeed, is continually forcing the inſtructions of this ſage monitor on our notice, and when "length of days" has not made

us ſufficiently acquainted with her, we fly to the aged that we may learn her counſels; or read them, with ſufficient certainty, in the miſconduct, diſappointment, and miſeries of others.

The hiſtorian makes it his peculiar glory, that, by faithfully recording the fates of kingdoms, by delineating the virtues which raiſed ſome to magnificence, and the vices which brought others gradually to deſtruction, he anticipates the future by a true repreſentation of the paſt, and teaches men wiſdom by the examples of others. But though from the ſhort period of human life, the narrowneſs of our views, and the neceſſary calls of duty, we are obliged to recur to the experience of thoſe who went before us for almoſt all our knowledge; yet the few events that happen to ourſelves, or that fall within the circle of our own obſervation, make a far more laſting impreſſion, and have a much greater influence over the heart.

The ſtrange viciſſitudes of fortune that happen to others we hear with faint emotions, and often regard them only as they ſerve to gratify curioſity and increaſe our ſtore of knowledge. The hiſtorian's eloquence and the poet's fancy can ſcarcely raiſe the tear of ſympathy, while they relate, with all the decoration of language, the miſeries of life; and thoſe ſorrows which only the beſt and ſofteſt boſoms feel occaſionally for the misfortunes of others, are but of ſhort duration. They vaniſh quick as the morning dews diſſolve before the riſing ſun. But the calamities and diſappointments which happen to ourſelves are conſidered as dear-bought experience, and treaſured up in the heart. Theſe are the counſellors that will make us wiſe and good; unleſs in deſpite of reaſon and of nature, we let life glide away unnoticed, without improvement in knowledge or in virtue. Serious reflection on what has paſſed, with a conſtant habit of comparing it to the future, ſeems, indeed, to be a rule of moral diſcipline na-

tural to the mind of man, and is one of the greateſt ſafeguards of virtue, as well as the beſt means of acquiring uſeful knowledge. It is neceſſary alſo, from the fluctuating ſtate of the heart, that we ſhould often take a retroſpective view of life, as well as ſettle ſtated periods for our religious duty, that we may increaſe prudence, eſtabliſh ourſelves in virtue, and acquire the ſteady habits of rational devotion. A full perſuaſion of the efficacy of this diſcipline, induced the inſpired author of the text to addreſs his people in theſe remarkable words—" Only take heed to thyſelf, and " keep thy ſoul diligently, leſt thou forget " the things which thine eyes have ſeen, " and leſt they depart from thy heart all " the days of thy life."

To this important ſubject permit me to call your attention; and, as the moſt effectual means of rendering it profitable, ſuffer me to point out ſome of the chief concerns of human life, which

ſeldom

ſeldom fail to happen to the generality of men, and which, therefore, claim your frequent reflection and ſerious meditation.

First, let me exhort you, when you "ponder the path of life," not to let the remembrance of your diſappointments, whatever they might have been, "depart "from your hearts." Few there are, I truſt, who have not met with theſe in ſome ſhape or other. Human hopes and expectations run ſo high, and the affairs of this world are conducted by ſo myſterious a hand, that we have almoſt daily cauſe to exclaim, "all is vanity and vexa-"tion of ſpirit." Were our hopes, indeed, ever ſo well founded, and our endeavours exerted with the moſt vigorous perſeverance, we are aſſured that "the race is "not always to the ſwift, nor the battle "to the ſtrong; but time and chance "happeneth to us all." Diſappointments therefore are to be numbered among thoſe neceſſary evils, which our bleſſed Lord has told us, "muſt come." If the ſufferance

of them have been grievous, let the remembrance of them be profitable. If they have croſſed your inclinations, or withheld from you fancied pleaſures, let them not die away without producing their proper effect in moderating the paſſions, and inſpiring that patient fortitude, which enables us, amidſt all the ſtorms of life, to maintain a character of dignified compoſure, reſignation and contentment. Always have an eye to the future, and fully expect that what has already happened, will again take place, in the endleſs revolution of events. This expectation of evil, as the lot of man, will have a wonderful effect on the mind in mitigating the force of it whenever it may arrive, and ſhould teach us to rely, with the moſt unbounded confidence, on the Almighty Father of our being, as the wiſe diſpoſer of all events. It will open to us thoſe laſting comforts alſo, which religion only can ſupply, and to which we fly with joy, as to the laſt aſylum of our woes. It will point out to us, with ſufficient certainty, that this

is

is not "the place of our appointed reſt;" that thoſe who would "fight the good "fight of faith," muſt ſubmit, with patient reſignation to the needful diſcipline of *this* life, if they ever hope to mingle with the glorious "ſpirits of juſt men "made perfect" in the *next*.

When once the mind can acquire theſe ſober habits of thinking, it will be naturally led to enquire, whether under the providence of an all-gracious power, our diſappointments have really operated to our diſadvantage or not. The vaſt and complicated ſyſtem of good and evil which is conducted throughout the univerſe, is by far too extenſive for us to view, as connected with events that are already paſt, and conſequences that are now lodged in the womb of futurity. But let us inveſtigate the matter, as far as we can, with candor and ſelf-examination. Awaken reflection and appeal to experience. Conſider thoſe wiſhes which long ſince have vaniſhed, and thoſe deſires which now

have loſt their ardor, and, perhaps, you will have little cauſe to regret that their completion was refuſed.

Let us apply theſe reflections to the almoſt general and predominant paſſion for wealth. Many a man, I am certain, has been the better for being in poor, or moderate circumſtances.—Recollect yourſelves—When you have ardently wiſhed for riches that were beyond your reach, if they had been granted, would you have applied them to the beſt purpoſes? Had you no vicious pleaſures in view? No purſuits in which your innocence and virtue would have ſuffered? No gratifications which degrade the dignity of human nature, and which religion condemns as idle, unprofitable or luxurious? Anſwer theſe queſtions, with impartiality, and a ſacred regard to truth, and, inſtead of murmuring, you will find occaſion, perhaps, on maturer reflection and ſentiments more improved, to bleſs that providence, whoſe guardian care withheld from you the means

means of infamy and guilt, by ordering you to tread the paths of middle life.

NEXT to the diſappointments of life, I wiſh you to reflect on the ſorrows which you might have experienced. This will open a pleaſing field of inſtruction to us. As the land is ten times more pleaſing to the mariner, after his veſſel has been daſhed againſt the rocks, and he himſelf has ſtruggled with the waves for life; ſo is the recovery of peace to thoſe who have eſcaped the ſtorms of adverſity. Many are the advantages we derive from this ſevere monitor, if we knew how to enjoy them. She ſeldom fails to ſoften and improve the heart. Aſſiſted by reaſon and meditation, ſhe wipes away thoſe numerous, petty ills, which vex the inconſiderate multitude, and which, from their conſtant recurrence, often form the ſum of their miſery. Man, unimproved by reflection, and untaught by experience of this ſort, is a poor, miſerable, inconſtant and diſcontented animal. Every trifling evil ruffles his

his temper, and for the moment makes him wretched. Even when no preſent calamity oppreſſes him, and no immediate danger hangs over his head, he will often form his own miſery, and be his own tormentor. Comforts meet him in the variegated path of life that are not enjoyed, bleſſings are conferred upon him that are never acknowledged, and, in this looſe, diſordered ſtate of mind, the Almighty Father is too often forgotten, whoſe gracious diſpenſations ought always to "fill our hearts with food and gladneſs."

MANY, too many are there in the world who come under this deſcription. Life paſſes on unnoticed by them; its joys and its griefs, its miſeries and diſappointments, afford them no inſtruction, and experience holds out her precepts in vain. This conduct is ſurely a great debaſement of the human character. To a wiſe man the experience of every diſaſter in life will afford ſome good; and one of the beſt diſtinc-

tions

tions that can be formed, perhaps, between him who merits this appellation, and one whom the ſcriptures, with great propriety, deem a fool, is that the former ſtudies to faſhion his mind, character and diſpoſition to the condition of his nature; while the latter, from want of cultivating thoſe faculties which diſtinguiſh him from the brute, and a blind indulgence of his paſſions, does every thing to thwart it, and conſequently makes himſelf wretched.

THIS indolence and inattention to our principles and conduct, is one of the moſt fatal errors. It operates inſenſibly, and often leads to the worſt conſequences. We are, for this reaſon, juſtly commanded, "to "keep the heart with all diligence, for "out of it are the iſſues of life." To you, therefore, let the ſcenes of life, and thoſe concerns in which we all are intereſted, never wear an indifferent aſpect. Conſider them, ſtudy them, and meditate on them. With regard to the ſorrows of life, we all of us, I ſuppoſe, have it in

our power to appeal to experience. And on no occaſion can we appeal to her with greater advantage. From paſt afflictions we derive the moſt ſoothing comforts, and in the ſevereſt trials, the moſt amiable principles are formed, and the gentleſt ſympathies of nature originate. Theſe too are the precious moments in which the ſoul dwells with more grateful adoration, and, perhaps, with a more lively faith, on the merits of a crucified Redeemer; whoſe tranſcendant love and glorious example derive additional force from his having been himſelf "a man of ſorrows "and acquainted with grief." Conſider, alſo, if ever you have been under the preſſure of calamity, with what an aching heart you viewed the unkindneſs and neglect of ſome, and with what gratitude and joy your ſoul expanded to the friendſhip and benevolence of others. Remember what kind emotions and what pious wiſhes ſuch conduct excited in your boſom, and do not forget *your* duty to others.

FROM a knowledge that ſorrow has this happy influence in forming the temper, and regulating the conduct of man, our heavenly Lord pronounced his peculiar bleſſing on "thoſe that mourn." It is from this pleaſing, though melancholy experience alſo, we acquire that equanimity and patient fortitude, which is ſo neceſſary for us in this probationary ſtate of our exiſtence. From having already felt the preſſure of calamity, you are no ſtrangers to its nature or its force. When ſome ſudden and unexpected blow, therefore, ſhall overwhelm your ſoul with anguiſh, let experience teach you by what imperceptible degrees the heart has again recovered its repoſe. Conſider the ſilent operations of time. Call to your remembrance how the ſtorm of adverſity, like the tempeſt in the air, has ſpent itſelf as it paſſed, till all around you was ſerenity and peace. Reflections like theſe will fortify your minds againſt thoſe ills of life which are yet to come, and, in ſome meaſure, ſecure happineſs, by repelling the force of miſery.

LET

LET me now direct your attention to a ſubject in which we all are equally intereſted, a ſubject which never fails to fill the guilty boſom with terror, and the heart of the religious man with a mixture of awful pleaſure and melancholy joy!—I mean, "the houſe of mourning," and the chambers of death. Among the ſtrange variety of events that happen to mortals, death is common to all. How ſoon that awful period will arrive, that alters the mode of our exiſtence, and wafts us into another world, we know not; all we are aſſured of is, that it muſt come, and cannot be very far off. Death is the debt due to nature; and as it is the laſt, ſo it is the moſt important event, that can happen to us in this world. Here, alſo, let us endeavour to learn what leſſons experience would teach us.

IT is not in the giddy and fantaſtic ſcenes of pleaſure, that the mind improves in wiſdom or in virtue; theſe for the moſt part are acquired by habits of reflection, and

and by taking ſuch views of human affairs, as diſpoſe the ſoul to thought and meditation. For this cauſe "the houſe of mourning" is a houſe replete with inſtruction, and is wiſely preferred to "the houſe of feaſting." It is there that our religious principles acquire an energy, not to be derived, perhaps, from any other ſource. It is there that thoſe truths which were announced to us as glad tidings from heaven, and thoſe duties which are founded on reaſon and contemplation, are ſtrengthened and improved by the ſofteſt and moſt powerful emotions.—It is not ſufficient for us weak mortals that we *know* our duty, it is neceſſary alſo that we ſhould ſometimes *feel* it. When, therefore, the calls of friendſhip led you to take the laſt farewel of thoſe you loved; when you wiped away the falling tear, and ſaw the anguiſh of a parent or a child; when you viewed the laſt ſtruggles of nature, ſaw the ſhades of death gathering around, and heard the ſhriek of woe;—then it was that the ſoul became enamoured of virtue, and felt

felt the importance of piety and prayer. In theſe melancholy moments we feel our own weakneſs, and ſee the vanities of life. Temptations to guilt and miſery no longer court us, under the deluſive forms of pleaſure, and ſin appears in all its native deformity. We confeſs the vice and folly of every mean purſuit, and the mind flies to religion for comfort and ſupport. Awakened to a ſenſe of danger, and terrified for our own ſafety, we lament the time that has been unprofitably ſpent, and reſolve for the future "to wake unto righteouſneſs "and ſin no more." It is then, that thoſe divine truths, which can alone make us "wiſe unto ſalvation," are believed with ardor, and admitted with joy. We pray, with earneſt devotion, for the mediation of our Lord and Saviour to ſecure us from the wrath that is denounced againſt paſt ſins, and we truſt, with humble confidence, in the Father of mercies, for that divine grace, which is at all times neceſſary "to "ſtrengthen the feeble knees, and to keep "our feet from falling."

Such are the ſentiments which a chriſtian feels in the houſe of mourning; and, if "we took heed to ourſelves, and kept "our ſouls diligently, we ſhould not let "them depart from our heart, all the "days of our lives." We ſhould recur to them, as often as the avocations of buſineſs and the duties of ſociety permit; and though the paſſions that accompanied them may vaniſh from the boſom, yet the principles they inſpired ſhould remain fixed and permanent.

It is of the utmoſt conſequence to take theſe retroſpective views of life, and ſtore the mind with the ſalutary principles which experience always affords. The efficacy of this moral diſcipline will appear to any one who conſiders the unhappineſs of thoſe thoughtleſs mortals, that are unprepared to meet any calamity, and that are diſconcerted at the moſt common exigencies of life. The ignorant and unguarded are tormented with a thouſand imaginary ills, and no reflection teaches

them to meet real ones with fortitude or reſignation. Caught with light and ſuperficial pleaſures, nothing engages their notice, but what immediately ſtrikes the ſenſes. They ſit idle and inattentive, while the wiſe man is forming maxims to regulate his conduct, meditating on paſt events, in order to withſtand the force of ſorrow, or "communing with his own "heart," to moderate its paſſions, its wiſhes and deſires. The fool ſtrays through the variegated fields of life, without pondering his path, and without reaping any advantage; while the wiſe man, like the bee, gathers honey from every flower as he paſſes. In his mind the remembrance of thoſe ideas which ſcenes of death create, will not only ſupply him with conſtant motives to devotion, but alſo improve his temper, and extend a ſoothing influence over all his affections. He will conſider thoſe about him as his fellow-travellers, with whom he ſoon muſt part. He will be ready to make every allowance for thoſe weakneſſes, which experience only corrected

in himſelf, and will be diſpoſed to view the tenor of their conduct with charity and moderation. Fully ſatisfied of the vanity of worldly enjoyments, from the ſhortneſs of their duration, and the goodneſs of divine providence, which has not confined happineſs to any particular ſituation, his mind is neither harraſſed by the miſeries and diſappointments that wait on ambition, nor preyed on by any inſatiable deſire of wealth. Charmed with nobler proſpects, and impreſſed with more exalted ſentiments, he is never engaged in thoſe mean and groveling purſuits, which cauſe ſuch enmity and confuſion among mankind. He is taught, by the ſtrange viciſſitudes of fortune, and the miſeries of others, to derive his happineſs chiefly from the exalted ſatisfactions of piety, and the cultivation of his own mind; from a diſpoſition formed to the worſhip of God and the love of man, by the precepts and example of the Saviour of the world. His ſorrows and diſappointments therefore are but few. In the figurative

language of ſcripture, "he drinks waters "out of his own ciſtern; and running "waters out of his own well." Such is the character that maintains dignity and reſpect in every ſituation of life. In proſperity, we view it with love and admiration, in adverſity, we look up to it with reverence.

STUDY, then, to acquire thoſe habits of thinking and reflection, on which ſo much intellectual excellence depends. It is this will give you ſtability of character, and render you happy in yourſelves, and reſpectable in the eyes of all men. It is this will teach you to unite prudence to virtue, without diminiſhing its ardor, and enable you to join reaſon to religion, without deſtroying the fervor of devotion. It is this too, that will diſtinguiſh you from that thoughtleſs and inconſiderate tribe of mortals, who, properly ſpeaking, have no character at all—who diſcover no ſteady reſolution to purſue good, and no conſtant care to avoid evil.

To

To render what has been ſaid the more effectual, let it be always remembered, that it is the excellence of his intellectual powers, that exalts man far above the brutes; and the diligent improvement of theſe, is what forms the only meritorious diſtinction between one man and another. But let it never be forgotten, that all knowledge is uſeleſs, and all excellence vain, which is unconnected with the practice of virtue, and which tends not to ſanctify the heart.

PERHAPS, angels and thoſe beings who were originally created ſuperior to man, or by gradual improvement in paſſing through different modes of exiſtence, have become ſo, in proceſs of time, differ only from man, in the purity and exaltation of their nature. Indeed, we can form no other idea of the Almighty Father, than that he is a being who enjoys the intelligent powers of rational creatures, free from every infirmity, in a degree of infinite perfection. The faint dawnings of wiſdom, which we now enjoy, ſeem

to promiſe to us a brighter day. Imperfect as it is, it muſt be deemed a feeble emanation of that omniſcience, by which the Almighty Father "created the hea-"vens, and laid the foundations of the "earth." We ought to cultivate it, therefore, with the utmoſt diligence and ardor; and though, after every anxious enquiry, we muſt ſtop far ſhort of perfection; yet it is in the power of every one, under the divine aſſiſtance, to gain what is ſufficient for the purpoſes of this life, and for bringing to our minds that gracious God, "from whom every good and perfect gift "cometh," with adoration, gratitude and praiſe. He has clearly pointed out to us the line of our duty, and ſcattered inſtruction before our eyes in a thouſand different forms. Ponder well, therefore, the path of life, and, in "preſſing on towards the high "calling of Chriſt Jeſus, our Lord, take "heed unto thyſelf, and keep thy ſoul "diligently, leſt thou forget the things "which thine eyes have ſeen, and leſt "they depart from thy heart all the days "of thy life."

SER-

# SERMON II.

MATT. xii. 20.

*A bruiſed reed ſhall he not break, and ſmoaking flax ſhall he not quench.*

THESE words, which St. Matthew quotes from the great evangelical prophet, are deſcriptive of our bleſſed Lord's miniſtry on earth, and afford us a ſtriking inſtance of that ſublime language, and beautiful imagery, with which the ſacred volume abounds. There is an unadorned majeſty, a ſimple grandeur found, in the word of God, which we may look for in vain elſewhere. Conſidered merely as a quotation from oriental poetry, the

metaphors in the text have uncommon force, and peculiar beauty. They are bold, but chaſte; and expreſs the moſt comprehenſive ſenſe with wonderful preciſion.

THE holy prophet is painting, in glowing colors, the heavenly mercies of our Redeemer's love; his great good-will to the wretched; or, to make uſe of more expreſſive language, his bleſſing to them that mourn, and his gracious favor to repentant ſinners.

THE poor wretch, who has been ſhattered by the ſtorms of fortune, or whoſe heart "has been pierced through with "many ſorrows," in yielding to the infirmities of his nature, is preſented to the mind, under the frail, but ſtriking emblem of "a bruiſed reed." And he, who has indulged himſelf in the lawleſs exceſſes of guilty paſſions, but, in whoſe boſom the generous ſpark of virtue is not yet quite extinct; he, who though he has been

been deluded, is not yet "hardened "through the deceitfulneſs of ſin;" but ſometimes liſtens to "the ſtill, ſmall "voice" of conſcience, is likened to "ſmoaking flax;" under which the ſleeping fire may, with prudent care and timely attention, be yet re-kindled, or ſuffered, from negligence, to go out for ever.

SUCH are the peculiar objects of our Saviour's love. Such is the weakneſs that he never bruiſed; but, on the contrary, was always ready to comfort and ſupport. Such was the frailty that he would not caſt off, or finally condemn; but which he ſtudied, with a divine benevolence, to ſtrengthen and reclaim.

PERMIT me, therefore, on the preſent occaſion, to recommend the conduct and example of our bleſſed Lord in theſe particulars, to your ſerious attention, as a rule of moral and religious duty, that claims, in the moſt diſtinguiſhed manner, our love and imitation.

IN

In contemplating the character of our Lord and Redeemer, he never appears in a more pleaſing point of view, than as the "healer of the broken-hearted, and the "comforter of thoſe that mourn." When we regard him as the heavenly Meſſiah, come from the everlaſting Father, to teach us the ſublimeſt truths and moſt important doctrines, we are awed by reverence and inſpired with adoration. When we conſider him as the ſoother of every affliction, and the gracious mediator, for human frailty, between God and man, we are ſmitten with love, and melt into the grateful emotions of exalted piety.

If we compare this part of his character, as a moral teacher, with the practice of thoſe who are ready to profeſs themſelves his diſciples, what a melancholy contraſt ſhall we diſcover! The friendſhip, the charity and kindneſs of the world are often confined within the narrow limits of ſelf-love. Men, in all ages, have too much reſembled the Scribes and Phariſees of old, who

who did good to thoſe only who could do good to them. Few are the benevolent actions that flow from the pure ſource of chriſtian charity; that have, for their object, the favor of God, and, for their reward, the ſecret ſatisfactions of virtue. Let the voluptuary, however, and he, who carries on a ſort of traffic in good works, ſeeking his reward from man only, liſten to the precept of his merciful Redeemer. "When thou makeſt a feaſt" (or, in a more extenſive ſenſe, when thou wiſheſt to ſhew thy liberality) "call the poor, the "maimed and the blind, and thou ſhalt "be bleſſed; for they cannot recompenſe "thee: for thou ſhalt be recompenſed at "the reſurrection of the juſt." But this is a rule of duty but little known, and leſs practiſed. The intercourſe of ſocial life is, for the moſt part, upheld by gratifications that, ſometimes, ſpring from intereſt, and oftener, perhaps, from vanity. Hoſpitality and kind attentions to the happineſs and eaſe of others are generally beſtowed on thoſe who are leaſt benefited

nefited by them, while the unfortunate may ſigh unpitied, or, at leaſt, unrelieved.

How widely different was the conduct of the bleſſed Jeſus! He often viſited the chearleſs hut of poverty, the bed of ſickneſs, and the habitations of the wretched. It was his ſupreme delight to ſeek out the fatherleſs and widow, and bid the afflicted be of comfort, wherever he met them;—to quell the wild diſorders of dæmoniac phrenſy, to huſh the tumults of contending paſſions, and point out the path that leads, through the miſeries of life, to the bleſſedneſs of heaven! But, alas! we cannot believe that "the houſe of mourning "is better than the houſe of feaſting;" and ſhrink from ſcenes of calamity, as from ſomething that would annoy our peace. The ſorrows of others are often not intereſting to the human heart, becauſe they are real; though, from ſome myſterious principle in our nature, we are always ready to fly to the ſplendid repre-

repreſentations of fictitious woes, and there, at leaſt, we can mingle the tear of ſympathy with the ſenſations of pleaſure. No ſooner do we meet the face that uſed to fill our hearts with gladneſs, clouded with ſorrow, than the ardor of affection abates, and ſometimes, I fear, nothing remains of friendſhip, but empty expreſſions of condolence, or, perhaps, affected pity.

OTHERS, more unkind, inſtead of ſtrengthening "a bruiſed reed," will often ſave their generoſity by ſome invidious alluſion to the cauſe of calamity, and vindicate their conduct by always combining misfortune with imprudence, or, if poſſible, with guilt. Such mean, ungenerous artifices are not uncommon in the world; but he who can practiſe them will find, if he examines his own boſom, that he has yet to learn the great duty of loving his neighbour in its fulleſt extent; that the very fountain of virtue

is

is corrupted, and that all his pretenſions to real goodneſs are founded in hypocriſy, or, to uſe the gentleſt expreſſion, in ſelf-deluſion. He may be told, too, that he has not only deceived himſelf, but others alſo, in having held up a falſe light to thoſe around him, in the ſunſhine of proſperity, which, as ſoon as the night of adverſity began to gather over them, vaniſhed from their eyes for ever.

MAY ſuch dereliction of principle, ſo inconſiſtent with the character of a chriſtian, and ſo diſgraceful to that of a man, be never charged on our conduct. May it be our peculiar glory, when we ſhall languiſh on the bed of ſickneſs, and look forward to that awful moment which wafts us into the preſence of the great Searcher of hearts, that we have never "broken a bruiſed reed;" but that we have endeavoured to comfort the afflicted, that we have, as opportunity offered, clothed the naked, fed the hungry, and

that,

that, with " true ſimplicity, and godly " ſincerity, we have had our converſation " in the world."

Of the number of unfortunate creatures that are ſcattered abroad throughout the world, many may aſcribe their diſtreſſes to " time and chance," or to the accidents of life, and ſome, it is true, may regard their ſorrows as the natural and juſt conſequences of their follies, their vices or their crimes. It is the province of reaſon, and the duty of religion, to diſcriminate between theſe, leſt we confound the innocent with the guilty, and beſtow on the latter, that diſtinction, which is due only to the former. Few, however, will be excluded from the wide circle of chriſtian benevolence. Even the wretch, whoſe " ſoul cleaveth to the duſt," who ſinks beneath the weight of ſorrows, brought on himſelf, might be reproved in the ſpirit of meekneſs, and reſtored, perhaps, by timely repentance, to " that peace of God, " which paſſeth all underſtanding." But what

what principally merits the cenſure of the law of Chriſt, is that coldneſs of heart, which is not intereſted in the fate of others;—which, if it knows how to "re-"joice with thoſe that do rejoice," cannot, or rather will not, complete the apoſtle's precept, by "weeping with thoſe that weep."

It may not be in our power to ſupply any, however neceſſitous, and however virtuous, with food and raiment; but miſery, comparatively ſpeaking, ſeldom ſprings from the want of theſe. Examine into the hiſtories of the unfortunate, I mean of thoſe that ought to intereſt us moſt, and you will find, that their calamities, if not cauſed, are often aggravated, by other ills; by ingratitude and neglect; by a nice and lively ſenſe of virtue, that has been deeply wounded, perhaps, by the wrongs and inſults of the world; by the loſs of thoſe, who were moſt dear to them; by a ſtate of miſerable dependence; and a thouſand other cauſes, that would render the

the board of plenty a barren waſte, if deſtitute of other ſatisfactions, and turn even the purple couch into a bed of ſorrow.

HERE, then, is an ample field for the exerciſe of that meek and bleſſed temper, which would not break "a bruiſed reed." We can ſooth and comfort, where we cannot cure, we can calm and aſſuage where time only can ſtill. Into the wounds of affliction we may often pour the balm of peace, and adminiſter, with chriſtian love, the comforts of religion, as a counterpoiſe for every ill.

BESIDES, we ſhould remember, as a further inducement to the practice of theſe mild and amiable duties, that the hour of anguiſh, is always an hour of weakneſs. The heart is then often at variance with itſelf; we become our own accuſers, without having been guilty of any crime; and think we ſuffer from our own folly and indiſcretion, when only the

cruelty and oppreſſion of the world have overwhelmed us, or the diſpenſations of heaven expoſed us to trials of conſtancy. Such are the ſituations, in which we need the kind ſupport of friendſhip, and admit with joy thoſe heavenly conſolations, which the God of all comfort "has adminiſtered "to us, through his ever-bleſſed Son." From ſuch ſcenes may you never wiſh to recede; but rather there "Let your light "ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee "your good works, and glorify your Fa-"ther, which is in heaven." Be always ready to alleviate the ſufferings of the virtuous by every means in your power, and endeavour to reconcile them to themſelves in the many various and trying ſituations of life. Loſe no opportunity of exerciſing towards the unfortunate, that "charity which thinketh no evil," and be ever willing to vindicate their principles and conduct, againſt the calumny and reproach of a ſelfiſh and unfeeling world.

We come now to conſider the latter part of the text; in which our Lord's mercy to repentant ſinners is manifeſted to us, in the language of prophetic inſpiration, by declaring, that "ſmoaking "flax he would not quench." Of the old law the moſt rigorous juſtice formed the baſis. "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," was its invariable deciſion, in all matters of right; and, in points that regarded conſcience, the duties of piety and virtue, no proviſion was made, in caſe of diſobedience, but the ſentence was paſſed and executed, whenever it fell within the juriſdiction of thoſe who ſat in the chair of Moſes, with unrelenting ſeverity. In caſes which came not under their cognizance, but which, notwithſtanding, were an offence to the Almighty, no atonement could be made, but by the imperfect and doubtful practice of ſacrifices and oblations; which, in time, became ſo proſtituted, that they were an "abomination to the Lord."

It was an office well worthy of the Saviour of mankind to ſupply this deficiency; to appoint ſome means of approaching the Almighty Father, "who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," even after offences had been committed againſt his divine Majeſty, with humble confidence, in the hour of returning ſorrow and contrition. It well became him, at whoſe birth the heavenly hoſt ſung "peace on earth, and good-will to man," to be the interceſſor for poor, offending mortals, and to eſtabliſh a law of higher authority, and that required ſomething more than the mere obſervance of the letter;—a law that applied to the conſciences of men; that corrected their ſins, and helped their infirmities; that promiſed the ſincere penitent aſſiſtance from above; and, while it puniſhed guilt, purified the heart from ſin. Accordingly, "good tidings "of great joy" were announced to all people at his coming into the world; and, among "the many gracious words that "proceeded out of his mouth," he declared,

clared, that " the Son of man came to " ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt." This bleſſed diſpoſition, which is, indeed, the foundation of the chriſtian covenant, diſcovered itſelf throughout his whole miniſtry; but more particularly in his beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son, his treatment of Mary Magdalene, and his occaſional intercourſe with the publicans and Samaritans.

We ought never to forget, that the whole conduct of our Lord was meant, as the higheſt pattern of excellence, for our inſtruction and improvement; but in no part of our chriſtian duty are we, I fear, more deficient, than in imitating that divine charity and forbearance, that " long-ſuffering and great goodneſs," which we have been deſcribing. Our God is a God of mercy, and our high-prieſt one, who can " be touched with " the feeling of our infirmities;" but man to man is often rigorous and unjuſt. The ſpirit of the goſpel is " gentle and kind;"

but the ſpirit of the world is too often cruel, perſecuting and ſevere. Few are the wretched, who find in it an aſylum from their woes; few are the guilty that can enter a ſanctuary, in which they may cleanſe their hearts from the pollutions of ſin, or learn, however deſirous, from a courſe of penitence and prayer, to ſilence the upbraidings of conſcience, and make their peace with heaven. The "bruiſed reed" may be ſhattered without mercy by the ſtorm of adverſity, and the "ſmoaking flax" ſuffered to become quite extinct, without one generous effort of chriſtian love, to kindle the ſlumbering fire beneath it. And yet we have all need of pardon and forgiveneſs; the grace and favor we withhold from others, our heavenly Father liberally grants to us; for "he wills not the death of a ſinner, but "rather, that he may turn from his "wickedneſs and live."

It is in imitation of this divine benevolence, that the apoſtle exhorts us to be "kind,

" kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one ano-
" ther, even as God, for Chriſt's ſake, hath
" forgiven us." And who can doubt but that this is a rule of conduct highly becoming a chriſtian's profeſſion? It is, indeed, a duty founded on the higheſt ſanctions; on the concurrence of our own reaſon, and our expectation of forgiveneſs in heaven. Beſides, it is both reaſonable and juſt, as well as charitable. Nothing can be more fallacious, than to form a fixed and determinate eſtimation of any one's character from his actions, conduct, and behaviour, at a particular ſeaſon of life; becauſe, nothing is more certain, than that the human heart is continually changing. For conviction on this head, let us commune with our own hearts. Who is there that cannot remember ſome habits, of which he would not now be aſhamed; and ſome particular modes of thinking, as well as acting, of which he does not, at preſent, ſee the folly and abſurdity, if not the ſinfulneſs and guilt?

A LITTLE chriſtian charity would enable us to extend theſe reflections to others. Nothing has a worſe effect on the mind of man, than to ſuppoſe it incapable of virtue, and, with a cruel neglect, leave it to its own depravity. If many have been ruined by unlimited indulgence, many alſo have, doubtleſs, been loſt by untimely rigor and needleſs ſeverity. How many are there who would now fly with joy back to the boſom of virtue, were not their intercourſe with the virtuous utterly cut off! Yes, there are crowds of ſplendid wretches, for whom humanity might drop a tear, who once were regarded as the faireſt and moſt amiable portion of the human ſpecies; but who now are loſt to honor, and to ſhame; whoſe miſery muſt be of the moſt complicated and poignant nature; whoſe hearts reproach them, without enabling them to reform, and in whoſe boſoms the reviving ſpark of virtue ſerves only to increaſe their anguiſh, 'till it is quenched for ever.

OTHERS there are, of a different deſcription, who have returned from a courſe of vice and licentiouſneſs to the happineſs of virtue, and the bleſſed peace of godlineſs. Painful experience has diſcovered to many, not only the guilt and miſery, but the vanity and "deceitfulneſs of ſin." When the ardor of youthful paſſions has ſubſided, reaſon and reflection have ſucceeded to the dominion of appetite, and "reclaimed the ſinner from the error of "his way." The "day-ſpring from on "high" might have ſhone with fuller luſtre on the minds of others, and they, who once "lived after the fleſh, to fulfil "the luſts thereof," may now "hunger "and thirſt after righteouſneſs," and ſtudy to do only the will of God. Such too is the powerful influence of good example, of friendly exhortation, and wholeſome reproof, that vice has been often forced to hide her head with ſhame, and "the "hearts of the diſobedient have been "turned to the wiſdom of the juſt."

WHEN-

WHENEVER theſe bleſſed effects begin to appear, we ſhould admit the ſorrowing penitent with joy and gladneſs within the pale of chriſtian love. Our confidence and friendſhip ſhould no longer be withheld, that the wretch, who ſometimes trembles at the rebuke of conſcience, may with greater comfort liſten to the warning voice of repentance, and perceive that the gate which leads to life, is not yet ſhut againſt him, and that virtue and religion are not without diſtinction here. This would be an act of exalted charity, that muſt hereafter rank us high in the eſtimation of our kind and merciful Judge, whoſe life on earth was ſpent in the redemption of ſinful mortals.

THE reformation of the wicked, or, at leaſt, the diſcouraging of vice and ſin, wherever we find them, is a duty the more indiſpenſible, as it is, in ſome meaſure, practicable to all. There is no one, however inconſiderable his ſtation in life, but may do ſome good, if he uſes all his

influence

influence in checking the progreſs of wickedneſs, and promoting the cauſe of piety, by active benevolence, and the example of a virtuous and godly life.

WHETHER, therefore, the wicked or unfortunate meet us in the paths of life, let us be always ready to heal, and not to wound. Let us deſpiſe the mean and ungenerous artifice of thoſe, who would derive a ſort of negative virtue to themſelves from the enormities of the world, and enjoy a malignant pleaſure in publiſhing the frailties and tranſgreſſions of others;—who build their pretenſions to divine favor, not ſo much on their own good works, as on their comparative merit with the moſt atrocious ſinners; and, inſtead of yielding to the voice of pity, imitate the arrogant and preſumptuous Phariſee, who thanked God, that he "was not as other men are, "unjuſt, extortioners, and adulterers."

MAY we always remember, that, next to the love of God, in the grand diviſion of

of a chriſtian's duty, is the love of man. May this love be "ſhed abroad in our "hearts," and ſhine with diſtinguiſhed luſtre on every occaſion, where our neighbour's peace and happineſs, both here and hereafter, may be concerned. May it be further adorned with the meekneſs and gentleneſs, the truth and ſincerity of the goſpel; and though every exertion of our benevolence, may fail of reforming the vices of ſome, and be inſufficient to remove the afflictions of others; yet ſtill "let us be patient in the continuance of "well-doing," cheared with the comfortable hope, that God will reward our "la-"bor of love," and the delightful ſatisfaction, that while we have endeavored to promote the ſalvation of others, we have, by the moſt effectual means, ſecured our own.

SER-

# SERMON III.

JOHN iv. 24.

*God is a ſpirit, and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth.*

RELIGION, before the chriſtian æra, though always conſidered as neceſſary to the welfare and exiſtence of ſociety, as well as to the happineſs of individuals, was cultivated with much diligence, indeed, but with little ſucceſs. Whatever improvement the human mind made on other ſubjects that came under its inveſtigation and enquiry; though poetry

poetry was brought to a degree of perfection which it has never ſince paſſed, near three thouſand years ago, and the hiſtorian wrote with every grace of language, fixed the ſtandard of elegance, and the laws of compoſition, when ancient Greece was in its glory; though the architect, the ſtatuary and painter alſo of thoſe times are ſtill unrivalled in their reſpective arts; yet certain it is, that religion remained for many ages in a ſtate of barbariſm and abſurdity (if we except one peculiar people) among all the known nations of the earth.

THE being of a God, indeed, was ſoon diſcovered, and univerſally believed. The ſtupendous works of the creation, added to the conſciouſneſs of ſelf-exiſtence, were alone ſufficient to produce this belief in any rational creature, and diſcover, at the ſame time, two of the great Creator's diſtinguiſhing attributes. However imperfectly he might at firſt have been conceived, it required little exertion of the mind, even in the infancy of reaſon, to aſcribe to the

cauſe

cauſe of ſo much beauty, grandeur and perfection, an infinite degree of wiſdom and of power. But it would have been of little conſequence for man to be aſſured of the exiſtence, omniſcience, and omnipreſence of his Maker, if he had not been taught alſo, that he was to be accountable to him for his actions. The knowledge of this relation between the creature and his Creator, whether originally derived from divine revelation, the principles of reaſon, or intuitive perception, has exiſted, we find, at all times and in all places, and is the very foundation of religion.

But much more was wanting to teach men how to "worſhip the Almighty Father in ſpirit and in truth." The comprehenſive plan of divine providence was but little underſtood; the fixed and immutable laws which preſerve the beauty and order of nature, were not diſtinguiſhed from thoſe contingencies which muſt neceſſarily ariſe in this mixed ſtate of things, chiefly from the free agency of

man, his paſſions, his infirmities, and different purſuits. Nor were thoſe cauſes ſufficiently conſidered which make it evident, that this world is only a ſtate of diſcipline, a ſcene of trial preparatory either to our exaltation to happineſs, or degradation to miſery, according as we have improved, or abuſed, the talent beſtowed upon us here.

HENCE originated the moſt unworthy notions of the Divine Nature. Every trifling calamity, and every inſtance of good fortune, was aſcribed to the immediate agency, or partial interference of the Deity; and ſacrifices were offered, or ſolemnities performed, accordingly. Almoſt every imperfection that debaſes human nature was attributed to him whoſe perfections are infinite, and who is the fountain of all wiſdom and goodneſs. Senſible of his omnipotence, men made their court to the great King of Kings, as they would to earthly princes, and attempted to bribe his favor, by ſuch ſacrifices and oblations

as are an abomination to him, and a diſgrace to humanity. Stately temples were erected to his honor, and theſe were hung round with gaudy trophies, as though he delighted in the vanities of human pomp and oſtentation. Satisfied of his omniſcience alſo, they ſo far mingled the corruptions of human nature with their religious ſentiments, as to think, that his decrees were to be purchaſed, and that the events of futurity were to be diſcloſed by conſulting oracles, augurs and ſoothſayers!

THUS, as the great apoſtle truly obſerved, "when they knew God, they glo-
"rified him not as God, neither were
"thankful; but became vain in their
"imaginations, and their fooliſh heart
"was darkened." The moſt favorable view of paganiſm preſents us with nothing but ſuperſtitious follies and the groſſeſt impurities. Yet theſe miſtaken duties of piety, as they ſometimes proceeded from a ſincere, though blind devotion, ſufficiently

ſhew the anxiety of the mind, its eager deſire to gain the favor of the Almighty, and make its peace with heaven. So ſtrong, indeed, is this propenſity of the human heart to worſhip the great Creator, that, rather than live without religion, men have greedily embraced whatever ſyſtems were promulged, however abſurd; and, as the ſchemes of policy are always interwoven with the doctrines of falſe religions, it is obſervable, that wicked and ambitious princes have often uſed the ardor of devotion to kindle the rage of battle, and to extend the conqueſts of tyranny. Mahomet, for inſtance, when he profeſſed himſelf a prophet, aimed only at power; and founded his empire on doctrines, that were purpoſely adapted to gratify his luxury and ambition.

THAT it was the duty of every human being to worſhip the Deity, there never was any doubt. The queſtion was how to worſhip him, and what ſervices he would be pleaſed to accept. The world ſtrove for four thouſand years, a time long enough, ſurely, for

for ſufficient trial, and never could produce a ſyſtem of religious worſhip or belief that we now think worthy of a rational creature. A revelation, therefore, was, doubtleſs, neceſſary to open and enlarge the mind of man, on this highly intereſting and important ſubject. This ſeems to have been the opinion of one of the moſt enlightened of the heathen philoſophers. The plan of providence is too complicate for human reaſon to develope, with any certainty or ſatisfaction, and the great firſt Cauſe of all things is too remote for the object of human enquiry. The mind, whenever ſhe exerts her powers, is overwhelmed with the ideas of his nature and exiſtence; and when we reflect on his attributes, contemplation muſt ſink into reverence, or riſe to adoration and praiſe.

Some being, therefore, endowed with ſupernatural perfection, was requiſite to give us juſt notions of the Deity and his providence, as far as it is connected with the happineſs of mankind. And to fami-

liarize this wonderful ſubject to human nature, ſome *ſenſible* means of inſtruction were neceſſary to ground a faith ſufficiently firm for the baſis of true religion, and practical virtue. This was the great office of our ever bleſſed Mediator and Redeemer, when he came to take up his abode with man. Without ſuch a gracious revelation, how ſhould we know the will of the everlaſting Father, or learn "to "worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth?" Our minds are dazzled with the view of infinity. We might as well attempt to examine the fires of the noon-tide ſun with our naked eyes, as contemplate the ways of providence without knowledge from above. Weak and helpleſs as we are, how can we trace out the operations of omnipotence? Blind and fooliſh as we are, how can we pry into the counſels of unſearchable wiſdom? And ignorant as we are of good and evil, how can we judge of thoſe plans which are carried on by infinite juſtice, and infinite perfection?

BUT though we have the precepts and example of Him who came from the Father laid before us; though "the day-"spring from on high hath viſited us," and a ſyſtem comprehending every thing that is truly ſublime in religion, or beautiful in morals, has been firmly eſtabliſhed on the ſureſt teſtimonies; yet mankind have not, at all times, made the beſt uſe of theſe divine favors, nor been ſufficiently careful to form their morals and religion on the true principles of the goſpel. Some have erred through ignorance or negligence; few, I hope, from deſign, and others have been miſled by the prejudices of education, or ſome ruling paſſion in their own boſoms. As to the groſs abuſes of the Romiſh church, it will be of little conſequence to enlarge on them here; but an attempt to point out a few cauſes of religious error, which are common to men in general, and to explain the nature of our duty towards God, according to the true ſenſe and ſpirit of chriſtianity, will be of ſome importance.

THERE is an uncommon propenſity in the human mind to conſider religion in a gloomy and ſuperſtitious light. Many think its duties irkſome, and its reſtraints painful and oppreſſive. The few, therefore, that practiſe it conſcientiouſly, on theſe terms, from a conviction of its truth, think it meritorious to live in direct oppoſition to the dictates of nature. Their characters are often marked with deſpondency and grief; a mixture of ſolemn reſerve, and gloomy ſatisfaction, derived from a life of woe. They are perſuaded that chriſtianity requires a continual mortification of every wiſh, and every deſire that tends to enjoyment, however rational it may appear to be, or conſiſtent with innocence. If it relates to the mind, they term it vanity; if it concerns the body, they deem it ſinful. This wretched abuſe of heaven's indulgent bounty to man, has ſerved to corrupt the purity of religion and injure its intereſts more, perhaps, than any other cauſe. It has frightened many from its duties, and deterred others from

from examining its doctrines. It has made ſome enthuſiaſts, and more, perhaps, hypocrites. Hence originated the ridiculous cuſtoms of flagellation, perpetual vows of celibacy, the confinements of the cloiſter, and other monaſtic ſuperſtitions.

These, it is true, are evils that are removed at a diſtance from us; but the cauſe that produced them is general, though the effects are various. Look abroad into the world, and though you may not meet monks and friars, confeſſors and profeſſional devotees; yet you will often ſee a moroſeneſs of diſpoſition, and a ſolemnity of deportment, ſubſtituted for the practice of virtue; and the viſions of a diſordered imagination, with a ſtedfaſt melancholy and rooted deſpondency, for the duties of piety and the exerciſe of devotion.

Now ſo far is the religion of Chriſt from encouraging ſuch diſpoſitions, and

ſo far is it from tending to oppreſs the mind of a good man, that it ought to be his chief ſource of happineſs. Rationally cultivated, and duly practiſed, it gives an additional reliſh to every enjoyment that virtue and innocence allow; and inſtead of increaſing the calamities of life, ſerves moſt effectually to deſtroy their violence, by "ſetting the affections of "the heart on things above." Even at the birth of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour, when the heavenly hoſt ſung "glory to God in the higheſt, and on "earth peace;" they cloſed their doxology, you well remember, with "Good-"will to man." Previous to the Meſſiah's entering on his divine miniſtry, he tells us, in the words of the prophet, that he was ſent "to heal the broken-hearted;" and the ſpirit of the goſpel throughout ſpeaks comfort and conſolation to all that receive the word of God. In his laſt inſtructions to his few faithful followers, he obſerves, "theſe things have I ſpoken "unto you, that my joy might remain

" in you, and that your joy might be " full." If you examine the epiſtles of St. Paul and the other apoſtles, you will find that a degree of inexpreſſible comfort, joy, and ſatisfaction, pervades the whole: Very different indeed from the trifling pleaſures of this world; pleaſures, like the " living waters" in the goſpel, " ſpringing " up into everlaſting life;" pleaſures that reſulted from a conſcious diſcharge of duty, and a full perſuaſion, that, in every difficulty and danger, they were under the guardian care of providence; pleaſures of a ſerious and compoſed nature, ſuch as pious contemplation on the grandeſt ſubjects that ever intereſted the human mind, afforded, " a conſcience void of offence," and an habitual intercourſe with heaven.

INSTEAD, therefore, of conſidering religion as a painful and irkſome taſk, we ought to hunger and thirſt after that righteouſneſs, which it inculcates, and it ſhould be our meat and drink to do the will of God. The calls of chriſtianity,

inſtead

inſtead of being thought grievous, will be found, when thoroughly underſtood, to be the nobleſt privilege of man. What, indeed, can give us ſo exalted an idea of our nature, as the conſideration that we are in a condition of approaching ſtill nearer and nearer to perfection, and are the peculiar objects of divine care! There is no other creature, as far as we can perceive, amidſt the infinite variety of creation, that has the leaſt idea of its Maker, or that can be a proper object either of future puniſhment or reward. But man is invited into the arms of divine mercy; graciouſly called to aſſociate with angels, and "the ſpirits of juſt men made per-"fect;" and that, not on the wretched terms of his leading a life of miſery and brooding care; but on condition that he embraces a ſyſtem which fills his mind with inexhauſtible ſtores of intellectual treaſure; a ſyſtem that multiplies all the rational enjoyments of life; that mediates its woes, and teaches us to worſhip the Almighty Father "in ſpirit and in "truth."

" truth." Who then, except the guilty, unrepentant ſinner, the ſuperſtitious, the timorous and the weak, can conſider it as burdenſome, or hear its injunctions with melancholy and deſpair?

THE primitive profeſſors of chriſtianity, we may obſerve, were of all men the moſt perſecuted and diſtreſſed by others; but in themſelves they were moſt happy and contented; they eat the frugal meal, which providence allotted them, with thankfulneſs, and, though ſurrounded with poverty and diſtreſs, were ever ready to ſing their hymns of joy. They were by no means inattentive to the duties of life while here; but they took care to be, in their intercourſe with the world, as " wiſe as ſer-" pents, and as harmleſs as doves." They were perfectly aſſured, that, while their bleſſed Maſter forbad the indulgence of every intemperate appetite, and every lawleſs deſire; while he checked every wiſh that led to guilty and luxurious pleaſures, or that tended to corrupt the integrity

of

of the heart; he inculcated alſo, that a moderate enjoyment of the bounties of providence, and a mind diſpoſed to live contented under its diſpenſations, is one of the firſt duties of every human being.

WHATEVER might be the pretended merits of continual mortification, the gracious and all-bountiful Father can be pleaſed only with voluntary obedience. Indeed, his ſervice is, what our Liturgy properly calls, "perfect freedom." He can be ſatisfied with no duties that come reluctantly from a rebellious ſpirit, or that are performed in direct violence to nature; but requires to be loved "with all our "heart, with all our mind, and with all "our ſtrength. The great and lofty One "that inhabiteth eternity," could not, indeed, conſiſtently with his perfections, command any religious duties, or preſcribe any external obſervances to his honor, which interrupted, or deſtroyed, the true happineſs of his creatures. As to thoſe pleaſures which the vanities of the world;

or the indulgence of vicious appetites afford, we need not wonder that they are forbidden, becauſe reaſon and experience ſufficiently inform us, that their natural tendency is guilt and miſery.

We are, it is true, ſurrounded with temptations, and ſubject to various ills; but if we examine our bleſſed religion we ſhall find, that one great object of it is, to furniſh us with ſufficient ſtrength to overcome them; and the few precepts, which to ſome may appear to lay too great a reſtraint on their conduct, will be found, on maturer deliberation, excellently adapted to correct thoſe extravagancies of the imagination which lead to dangerous purſuits, and thoſe miſtaken notions of happineſs which often end in diſappointment, or in tainting the heart with guilt.

Our Lord, while he withdrew us from every improper ſcene, and taught us to overcome the deceitful pleaſures of the world,

world, directed our minds to the true ſources of permanent felicity. If he withheld from us ſenſual pleaſures, that quickly die away, he gave us intellectual joys that never will deſert us. He preſcribed a ſyſtem of moral and religious duty, the rational obſervance of which was meant to give us dignity and happineſs in this world, and crown us with immortal glory in the next. Well, therefore, might the Saviour of the world compare every one who heard his doctrine and practiſed it, "to a wiſe "man that built his houſe upon a rock;" and well might he liken him who heard it not, "to the fooliſh man that built "his houſe upon the ſand."

If ſuch views of chriſtianity ſhould ſtrike you as rational and well founded, endeavour to form your practice and principles accordingly: but, at the ſame time, think and examine for yourſelves; do not live in ignorance, or perplexity, on the moſt important concern of life, for want of exerting your intellectual powers,

nor ſuffer yourſelves to be miſled, either by the errors or ſuperſtitions of others. Above all things ſtrive to overcome that coldneſs of heart, that negligence and dreaming indolence which are ſo common in religious concerns. This is an error, to call it by no ſeverer term, of all others the moſt fatal. The folly of it can only be equalled by its danger and its guilt. In a heart thus careleſs of the divine favor, and inſenſible to its bounty, no fruit can ſpring. Some, it is true, may reſemble the neglected ſoil that produced only thorns and briars; but this is the cold, ſtony ground where nothing grows.

You will aſk, perhaps, how are we to create thoſe holy joys and ſatisfactions? Muſt they not ſpring up involuntarily in the heart? If we do not find this religious comfort already there, from our internal frame and conſtitution, where ſhall we ſeek for it? Is it not dangerous to force the mind upon expedients to enjoy this devotional warmth, which many are ready to confeſs they neither feel in their

their attendance on public worſhip, nor in the private diſcharge of pious duties? Has it not often produced hypocriſy in ſome, and enthuſiaſm, or religious horrors in others; firſt, by heating the imagination with fear and terror, and then, by ſubſtituting its diſordered viſions for the genuine operations of the mind? This cannot, perhaps, in ſome inſtances, be denied; yet I will confidently aſſert, that, if any human mind can be intereſted at all, if it has any capacity for intellectual enjoyments and ſuperior gratifications, it can no where find ſuch rational ground for them as in religion. But this I hope to illuſtrate in the following diſcourſe; in which I ſhall conſider ſome of the moſt powerful motives that we have for earneſtneſs and fervor, for diligence and conſtancy, in the performance of every pious duty; at the ſame time, I ſhall endeavour to ſtate the ſubject under our conſideration more fully, by ſome additional obſervations, and ſhew what it is "to worſhip the Almighty Fa-"ther in ſpirit and in truth."

SER-

# SERMON IV.

JOHN iv. 24.

*God is a ſpirit, and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth.*

IN a former diſcourſe on theſe words, I was led, by the nature of the ſubject, to warn you againſt that coldneſs of heart, that negligence and indifference which are ſo common in religious concerns. I purpoſed, as the moſt effectual means of correcting theſe indolent diſpoſitions of the mind, to conſider ſome of the many ſtriking motives that we have, for earneſtneſs and fervor, for diligence and conſtancy in the performance of every pious

duty. This, with ſome additional obſervations, in order to ſhew what it is to "worſhip the Father in ſpirit and in "truth," ſhall form the ſubſtance of my preſent diſcourſe.

First, then, let us ſeriouſly call to mind that great and gracious God to whom all our ſervices are directed, and "in whom we live and move and have "our being." Let us deeply impreſs our minds with the idea of his perfections; his juſtice, his goodneſs, his wiſdom, and his power. Theſe are qualities we highly regard in the very imperfect degree in which man poſſeſſes them; they are, indeed, the great objects of our ambition, our love and admiration here. And ſhall they ceaſe to intereſt us only when we contemplate them in Him who poſſeſſes them in a degree of infinite perfection? Shall we read, with wonder and delight, the page of the poet and philoſopher, and ſhall we remain unintereſted with the volume of nature ever open to our view, from

from which all their real excellencies are tranſcribed? Theſe are conſiderations, which cool, abſtracted reaſon, will ſuggeſt, and, without much exertion, multiply continually. They have, indeed, their effect in fully convincing us of error and inconſiſtency, but they apply to the underſtanding only. We muſt have higher motives to invigorate our piety; motives that reach the heart. Accordingly when we conſider the ſupreme Being as our Father, to whom, as children, we look up for protection, and our God, on whom our eternal happineſs depends, ſuch diſtant arguments are loſt, and the ſoul is agitated by hope and fear, by awful reverence and anxious joy.

THIS indeed is the grand principle upon which all religion is built; that we are ſoon to be the objects of divine puniſhment or reward. It could hardly be believed, if experience did not too often confirm the fact, that a rational being, living with this awful truth impreſſed

upon his mind, ſhould be inattentive to its conſequences, and ſhew by his conduct, that he is indifferent to thoſe duties which the relation between him and his Maker, as well as the condition of human life, indiſpenſibly require.

We are ſufficiently aſſured, that our continuance here will be but for a ſhort time, and yet the generality of mankind make ſuch proviſion in this world, as though it was to laſt for ever. All their thoughts, their wiſhes and deſires ſeem to center here. Here is their "treaſure, and "here their heart is alſo." Though the ſcene is continually changing before their eyes; though a year never paſſes, but the remembrance of ſome that are no more, would warn them of the cloſe of life; yet on they ruſh, with impetuous ardor, ſtill chaſing the gay phantoms of hope, and admitting with eager joy, the viſionary pleaſures of every new deſire. In the mean time, the calls of piety are ſeldom heard, though morality, perhaps, might,

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in ſome meaſure, be practiſed under the form of worldly policy, or the odious maſk of ſelf-love.

AMID ſuch variety of purſuits, in the heat of ſo many eager and contending paſſions, the heart can admit no impreſſions, from experience, ſufficiently powerful to engage our ſerious attention, nor any reflections from reaſon, of weight enough to regulate the paſſions, or aſſuage the ardor of worldly deſires. Thus are the intereſts of eternity often neglected, and the whole ſoul engroſſed with the things of this world. Man, indeed, is ſubject to a variety of groveling appetites and vain deſires. He is ſurrounded alſo with objects that ſtrike the ſenſes, and provoke their gratification. But this was neceſſary to conſtitute a life of diſcipline and trial; yet we muſt not forget, that there are objects alſo that court the attention of his higher intellectual powers. Theſe, it is true, afford gratifications of a very different nature, and require the voluntary exerciſe of the mind to diſ-

cover their intrinſic excellence and ultimate good. But how many ſeize, with eager fondneſs, the tinſel joys that glitter before their eyes, and neglect thoſe laſting treaſures which are to come, and which true wiſdom would diſcover! How many act, in ſpiritual concerns, like the fooliſh and extravagant prodigal, who parts with his patrimony in reverſion, for what is ſufficient to purchaſe the pleaſures of the preſent hour.

THESE reflections, I am ſenſible, are but ill-ſuited to the bulk of mankind, who, while the world ſmiles around them, or preſents no ſcenes of ſtriking calamity, are not diſpoſed to direct the attention of their minds to any other object. They glide ſilently down the ſtream of time, careleſs of what rocks may ſhatter their bark, and unmindful of that awful moment, in which they muſt lapſe into the tide of eternity. So far are many from being intereſted in their duty towards God, and thoſe meditations which enforce it,

it, that their frame of mind ſeems totally averſe to religion; at beſt, they turn from it, as from a matter of little importance, that might be done, or left undone, juſt as it ſuits the prevailing humor.

LET me hope that theſe reflections do not apply to your conduct. May it be your ſupreme care, amidſt the neceſſary occupations of life, to cultivate and deſerve the favor of the Almighty. But in order to this you muſt inure yourſelves to diſcipline. We become attached to objects, only by ſuffering them to dwell on the mind with pleaſure. We think it neceſſary to allot a large ſhare of our time to other duties, let there be ſtated periods alſo for our duty towards God. The mind can never be properly engaged where it ſeldom directs its attention; nor are the ſatisfactions and comforts of true piety to be enjoyed, but by a ſtated and habitual courſe of duty, and the exerciſe of calm and ſteady meditation. Do you, therefore, by this wholeſome diſcipline, im-

prove paſt events, and in ſome meaſure anticipate thoſe that are to come. The portion of time allotted for our ſojourning here is but little, and of that little much is already ſpent; every hour, nay every minute that fleets away, is robbing us of more, and bringing us nearer to our journey's end. We are all haſtening, by a quick and uninterrupted progreſs, to "the "place of our appointed reſt," from whence there is no retreat; where no contrition, however ſincere, can make amends for paſt neglect, and where thoſe reflections, which now, indeed, under the bleſſing of God, may prepare us for happineſs, will only ſerve to quicken the remorſe of conſcience, and cover us with ſorrow and confuſion.

IMAGINE to yourſelves that the time is come, when the ſhifting ſcene of life ſhall cloſe, and this earthly tabernacle ſhall be diſſolved. But remember this is no flight of fancy; no figure of ſpeech to amuſe the mind; we are only anticipating an event which we are ſufficiently aſſured muſt

and

and will take place. Fix your attention, then, for a moment, on that awful ſcene, when the ſhort leaſe of nature is expiring, and the world, with all its proſpects, is about to vaniſh for ever; "when the ſilver "cord ſhall be looſed, the golden bowl be "broken, and the fountain at the heart "ſhall ceaſe;"—then aſk yourſelves whether you think religion is to be trifled with, and whether it will then appear to you in an indifferent or unintereſting light.

GRACIOUS God! in that trying hour, may we look up to thee with humble confidence, as to the rock of our ſalvation! may we never know thoſe unquiet moments which a wounded ſpirit cauſes! but may our departure from this world be in peace, and our acceſs to thee prove "the "crown of glory," not "the ſting of ſin!" Theſe are conſiderations ſurely, that ought not only to intereſt us, when we hear the knell of a departed friend, but ſhould diſpoſe us at all times, "to work out our "ſalvation with fear and trembling."

FARTHER,

FARTHER, let gratitude have its due influence in promoting our duty towards God. Let it frequently remind us of the diſtinguiſhed rank we hold in the vaſt works of creation. We are not only called into a ſtate of exiſtence, but endowed with excellencies, far ſuperior to what any other being enjoys, that comes under our obſervation; and this, only from the good-will of him that made us. From the ſame ſource of inexhauſtible goodneſs, every bleſſing flows that our nature is capable of enjoying. Though we might not experience the particular comforts, on which the blind partiality of our hearts is ſo fondly bent, and that, perhaps, only becauſe it would eventually interfere with our ultimate good; yet there is no one that does not, in ſome reſpect, ſhare of the divine benevolence. It is not confined to the tranſitory enjoyments of wealth and honors; the grant of ſenſual pleaſure, or an exemption from corporal pain. It is as diffuſive as the light that viſits us from heaven,

heaven, and general as the dew-drops that enrich the earth. Whatever higher gratifications we may enjoy from the exercise of our minds; whatever pleasure results from the cultivation of science; whatever comforts flow from friendship and the dearer relations of life; the never-failing joys of hope, the sweet delights of fancy, and the calm pleasures of meditation, all, all are to be traced up to the "Father "of lights," that fountain of goodness, "from whom every good and perfect gift "must primarily come."

What must the mind of that man be, who can fall into this way of thinking without being interested and engaged in the subject! But if this should notwithstanding be insufficient to warm his heart with religious sentiment; to give vigor to his morals and fervor to his piety; let him dwell with stedfast attention on the office, the character, the system, and conduct of our blessed Lord and Saviour. Here, indeed, the glory of God and his good-will

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to man, appear in a moſt tranſcendant light.

THE wiſdom of providence has ſo ordered it, that, in this gracious revelation of its purpoſes and views, every religious motive is to be found that can poſſibly influence the human heart. If it be actuated by the hope of reward or the fear of puniſhment; there are ſuch rewards propoſed as cannot enter into the imagination to conceive, and ſuch puniſhments denounced againſt the impious and diſobedient, as the mind ſhrinks from with horror. If it be diſpoſed to act from love and reverence, where will it find objects ſo proper for the exerciſe of theſe affections, as the Almighty Father, who is there revealed in all his glory, and his ever bleſſed Son, who was the perfect pattern of all excellence both human and divine? In like manner, if we are affected with a full diſplay of the divine goodneſs, and capable of being directed to our duty by gratitude and love; or, if we wiſh to be led to obedience

obedience by that admiration and regard which are due to the moſt beautiful and ſublime ſyſtem of moral and religious duty that ever engaged the attention of man; let us look into the holy goſpel, and all theſe motives will offer themſelves with an irreſiſtible efficacy, one ſhould think, to attach the mind to piety and virtue.

YET if the heart ſhould remain unintereſted, and only the underſtanding coldly engaged; if no ſenſibility gives energy and ſpirit to our religious duties, let us laſtly, and, above all things, fix our attention on the laſt, dying ſcene of our gracious Lord and Redeemer, when he lift up his eyes unto heaven, and ſaid, "Father, the "hour is come." It is impoſſible for language to do juſtice, in deſcription, to thoſe emotions which we ought to feel on this grand, this awful and affecting occaſion! Ruthleſs muſt be the heart, and blinded the underſtanding of that man, who can contemplate ſuch ſcenes without feeling

feeling himſelf deeply intereſted in them. Such a combination of all the nobler paſſions that affect the human heart, no other event could poſſibly produce. If he, the moſt innocent and heavenly of all beings, has endured the moſt ſhameful, as well as the moſt cruel death; yet by that death he "has opened to us the "gates of everlaſting life." If he was forced to ſubmit to the violence and brutality of an inhuman mob, if he was buffeted and ſcourged, previous to his ſufferings on the croſs, yet "he was "bruiſed for our tranſgreſſions, and "theſe are the ſtripes by which we are "healed." Such an uncommon union of grief and joy, of reverence and love, no language can poſſibly expreſs, and no boſom, but a chriſtian's, feel. Let this then be the vital ſpring of piety. Let this give an energy and fervor to your devotion, not to be derived from any other ſource. With hearts, enlivened by every principle and ſentiment that can firmly attach and humanize the ſoul,

proceed

proceed in the heavenly track of chriſtian duty, with a ſpirit elevated far above the narrow views of the cold moraliſt, and equally remote from the ſuperſtition and ignorant enthuſiaſm of vulgar minds.

But though I wiſh to kindle devotion in the heart, and ſee the duties of piety ſpring from that ſource; yet while I conſider religion as a rational ſyſtem of conduct, towards our neighbour and our God, I cannot ſufficiently diſapprove of thoſe unmeaning raptures, and thoſe wild extravagancies of the mind, which are too often miſtaken for the pure and holy comforts that reſult from the exerciſe of true piety; comforts in which the wandering powers of fancy have no ſhare; comforts ariſing from meditation on the ſublimeſt ſubjects, and prayer influenced by the moſt exalted affections; by love, by gratitude, by adoration and praiſe.

But in almoſt every concern of life we ſee men, who profeſs themſelves advocates for

for truth, hurried into extremes by their ignorance, their prejudices or paſſions. It becomes us therefore, if poſſible, to gain that middle point of perfection, on either ſide of which lie ignorance and error. In order to this, let us be ever open to inquiry, and, for the rectification of our principles and conduct, appeal to the word of God rationally explained. It often happens in morals, as it does in religion, that men will frequently juſtify one extreme, by claiming a ſort of negative merit in avoiding the other. Thus, the miſer is reconciled to the mean and ſordid vice of avarice, by publiſhing to the world that he is not guilty of riot and profuſion; and the man who is perfectly indifferent to religion, who ſeldom thinks of death, and never of futurity, would claim ſome merit becauſe he is no enthuſiaſt. May we all endeavour to avoid the imputation of either extreme, by taking an enlarged view of chriſtianity, and impreſſing our minds with the perfections of that Almighty Being, who to the greateſt

greateſt wiſdom unites the greateſt goodneſs, and who has tempered the rigor of omnipotence, with the mildeſt juſtice, and the moſt tranſcendant mercy. This will ſupply us with all the great and permanent inducements to virtue, piety, and godlineſs. But the ſuffering of one religious motive to take full poſſeſſion of the heart, from a prevalence of diſpoſition to indulge that particular paſſion to which the motive applies, is one great cauſe of religious error; and has ſerved, in ſome meaſure, to produce thoſe numerous ſectaries that are ſprung up in the chriſtian church.

It is, indeed, natural for the guilty to think of nothing but the puniſhment that is denounced againſt them; and the man of a tyrannical diſpoſition will be apt to form his ideas of the Deity, from the depraved paſſions of his own mind. The timid and the weak alſo may be led to regard religion with too much terror. Its awful injunctions may continually agitate

their boſoms with deſpondent paſſions, or diſorder their imaginations with the conſtant impulſes of fear. But it ſhould be one great object with the preachers of chriſtianity, to prevent "the poor in ſpi-"rit" from dwelling too much on "the "terrors of the Lord;" for if their lives are exemplary, it is to them that the bleſſings of the goſpel are particularly promiſed.

Some alſo, becauſe they are told their Saviour died for them, and becauſe they know that God is gracious, are perſuaded that grace is to do all, and therefore are too inattentive to the practical duties of life, and take no care to "work out their own "ſalvation." While the ignorant and vulgar, of almoſt every deſcription, borne away by the tranſports of an uncultivated, and diſordered mind, neglect thoſe permanent motives to piety, which the exerciſe of the underſtanding would ſupply, and are ſatisfied with an occaſional hour ſpent in the gloomy raptures of an ignorant enthu-

enthuſiaſm. Heated by appeals made ſolely to thoſe paſſions, which are moſt eaſily excited in vulgar minds, fear and wonder, and naturally fond of what they do not underſtand, they are tranſported into the regions of myſtery, and eaſily miſtake the momentary impreſſions which fancy admits, for thoſe principles which reaſon ſhould examine, and the heart approve Hence it is, that the enthuſiaſt is always bold and confident in aſſerting his religious paſſions for religious principles. Hence he is averſe to that openneſs of enquiry, that calmneſs and equanimity which the more rational part of mankind wiſh to obſerve. It is owing to this elevated ſpecies of devotion, firſt kindled by paſſion, and then nouriſhed by the ſuggeſtions of a heated imagination, that too many, I fear, have neglected the milder virtues of chriſtianity, which form the chief ornament of the human character.

When the errors of ſo many miſtaken men preſent themſelves to your notice, let

it be a motive with you to cultivate religion not only as a ſacred duty, but as a rational rule of conduct. Let the underſtanding ſhare in the pious joys of your devotion, and give not yourſelves up to the looſe and wandering impulſes of the heart. At the ſame time, let your ſervices to the great Author of all being, be performed with that fervency of ſpirit, and that earneſtneſs of ſupplication, which ſo properly become us, and which are ſo eminently due to him. Let not your piety, by any means, be a cold, indifferent duty, but let it be accompanied with ſuch emotions of the heart as become a rational and dependent creature. In the midſt of thoſe comforts and ſatisfactions which ſpring from a ſincere devotion to God, " be always ready to give a reaſon-" able account of that hope which is " within you, with meekneſs and with " fear."

Some might be led into extravagance, in their religious ſentiments, by the natural

tural heat and violence of their paſſions; ſome from a blind and unaccountable zeal only for the myſterious parts of religion; and others who, from inattention to their education, or from the prevalence of vicious examples in their youth, have neglected to form their religious principles, or treated all religion with neglect, if they ſhould be ſo happy, when arrived to years of diſcretion, to convince themſelves, by an impartial enquiry, of the truth of chriſtianity, are often in as much danger of believing too much, as they were before of believing too little. The firſt ardors of devotion, generally have a tendency to enthuſiaſm. But we ſhould always remember, that the religion of Chriſt is not calculated to produce thoſe zealous tranſports which ſome have affected, and others miſtaken for piety; but is meant to inſpire virtuous habits and holy diſpoſitions; devotion that does not occaſionally break out into fits of rapture, but which extends its influence over all our actions; which ſoftens our hearts, and ſtrengthens

our principles; which only ſlumbers in our boſoms, amidſt all the buſy occupations of the world, and which is ever ready to preſerve our innocence, or diſpoſe us to the ſacred duties of prayer, thankſgiving and praiſe.

LET ſuch religion, then, claim an intereſt in your heart. Let it often employ your ſerious meditations now, for be aſſured, it will be the only important object of your hopes hereafter. Add to this, it will ſoften your calamities and increaſe your comforts in this world. It will ennoble your ſentiments, and will, at the ſame time, both humanize, and invigorate the mind. It will always ſecure your principles againſt the aſſails of vice, and give you that intellectual ſoundneſs and ſobriety of ſentiment, which are the foundation and ſupport of every thing that is excellent in morals. But theſe happy effects, you will remember, are produced only by religion properly cultivated, and diligently practiſed.

MAY

MAY it be your peculiar care, therefore, to unite all the motives to godlineſs and virtue which the Chriſtian diſpenſation affords, to animate, to ſtrengthen and ſupport your piety. May you duly conſider every argument that applies to the underſtanding, and joyfully hear every appeal to the heart! For without this, however you may "worſhip the Father "in *ſpirit*, you cannot worſhip him in "*truth*."

# SERMON V*.

EXODUS ii. 6.

*And when she had opened it, she saw the child; and behold the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, "This "is one of the Hebrews' children!"*

THE short piece of pathetic history from which I have taken the text, is as follows: Pharaoh, King of Egypt, a little before the birth of Moses, began to be exceedingly alarmed at the amazing increase of the Jews, who had now for

* Preached at the Parish Church of St. Mary, Islington, for the benefit of the Charity-Children.

many

many years lived under him and his anceſtors, in a ſtate of the moſt abject bondage and ſlavery. Their number, at this time, we learn, was greater than that of his own people. He was afraid, therefore, leſt in ſome future war, they might join with his enemies againſt him, and not only obtain their freedom, but likewiſe endanger the ſecurity of his crown. To prevent this, after having uſed two barbarous expedients without effect, he charged all his people, as the holy writer records, ſaying, "every ſon that is born, "ye ſhall caſt into the river, and every "daughter ye ſhall ſave alive."

THE hiſtory of the world, perhaps, will not furniſh a more crafty or inhuman piece of policy. In this time of cruelty and oppreſſion, the miſerable wife of a poor Levite conceived, and chanced to bear a ſon; "and when ſhe ſaw him "that he was a goodly child," ſays the ſcripture, "ſhe hid him three months; "and when ſhe could hide him no longer,

"ſhe

" ſhe took for him an ark of bulruſhes,
" and daubed it with ſlime and with
" pitch, and put the child therein; and
" ſhe laid it in the flags by the river's
" brink: And his ſiſter ſtood afar off,
" to wit what would be done to him:
" And the daughter of Pharaoh came
" down to waſh herſelf at the river, and
" her maidens walked along by the river's
" ſide; and when ſhe ſaw the ark among
" the flags, ſhe ſent her maid to fetch
" it. And when ſhe had opened it, ſhe
" ſaw the child, and behold the babe
" wept; and ſhe had compaſſion on
" him, and ſaid, This is one of the He-
" brews' children!" But her compaſſion was not a tranſient feeling, that vaniſhed with the ſight of the object; it was not a tear of pity that ſtarted involuntarily from her eye, and then was wiped away without any farther remembrance; for we learn ſhe had him nurſed at her own expence; and as the infant thrived under her protection, ſhe became ſtill more pleaſed with the object of her charity,

and

and at length adopted him for her ſon. And ſhe called him Moſes, " becauſe," ſaid ſhe, " I drew him out of the water."

SUCH is the hiſtory of the childhood of heaven's great Lawgiver; and I ſhould be guilty of the greateſt injuſtice to virtue, were I to paſs over this affecting ſtory, without remarking that the amiable conduct of Pharaoh's daughter does honor to her ſex. In their boſoms, indeed, we are taught to look for all the milder virtues of humanity, and thoſe endearing ſympathies from which the chief comforts of life originate. Formed by nature, perhaps, for entering into the joys and griefs of others, with a more exquiſite ſenſibility than ourſelves, we expect from them the willing tribute of a tear, whenever calamity or misfortune calls for it; and though a heart capable of lively affections, requires the ſtricteſt diſcipline, and is often in danger of miſery and guilt; yet it ſhould not be forgotten, that it is ſometimes alſo the ſource of the moſt diſintereſted

diſintereſted and benevolent actions, that can dignify or adorn the human character. Numerous teſtimonies might be collected, from the ſacred volume, to warrant and confirm this aſſertion. The hiſtory of the text is none of the leaſt. The great Jewiſh legiſlator was ſaved from deſtruction by the generous compaſſion of a woman. It was the protecting power of ſenſibility that ſheltered the helpleſs infant, nurſed him through his childhood, formed his manners, and enlarged his mind with ſcience. The Holy Bible will furniſh many more inſtances, and, if we look into the New Teſtament, we ſhall find the ſame kind and ſympathizing diſpoſition, which enables us to "rejoice with them that do rejoice, "and weep with them that weep," diffuſing its bleſſings through almoſt every part of it. The holy apoſtle, Paul, though perſecuted from one corner of the world to another, though nothing but cruelty, dangers, and diſtreſſes followed him wherever he went, was not deſtitute of ſome few friends, who ſhared all his ſorrows, and

ſerved

ſerved to mitigate all his calamities. But, let it be remembered, that of theſe friends, ſome of the moſt remarkable were women. In his epiſtle to the Romans, he thus writes to his brethren—" I commend unto " you Phebe," ſays he, " that ye receive " her in the Lord, as becometh ſaints; " and that ye aſſiſt her in whatſoever buſi- " neſs ſhe hath need of you; for ſhe hath " been a ſuccourer of many, and of myſelf " alſo. Greet too, Priſcilla and Aquila, " my helpers in Chriſt Jeſus, who have " for my life, laid down their own necks; " unto whom not only I give thanks," ſays the venerable apoſtle, " but alſo all " the churches of the Gentiles." But there is a farther inſtance of divine compaſſion recorded in the goſpel, which claims the gratitude of the whole world. When the bleſſed Saviour of mankind wanted even the neceſſaries of life, when " he was deſpiſed and rejected of men," and ſo poor, that he had not where to lay his head, we read, in the plain, unaffected language of the apoſtles, and we ought

ought ever to remember it with veneration, " that certain good women mi-" niſtered to him of their ſubſtance." And though Judas betrayed him, and Peter, after all his paſſionate vows, both forſook him and denied him, yet the fidelity of the few pious women that attended him, remained firm and unſhaken to the laſt; for three of them, St. Mark tells us, went to perform the laſt, melancholy offices to his memory, and diſcovered thāt friendſhip and devotion for their Lord after his death, which diſtinguiſhed their ſervices to him while he was alive. At the firſt break of morn, before any of his other diſciples attended, they ſought his ſepulchre, and with the rich ſpices of the Eaſt, meant to embalm the ſacred corpſe. This was the laſt duty that piety could diſcharge. It ſprung from the ſoft emotions of the heart, when deeply impreſſed with ſorrow, and warmed with the fervor of devotion. It was a duty which the awful and affecting occaſion ſeemed to require, and which well ſuited the gentle-

neſs

neſs of their nature to perform. Many other inſtances might be adduced; but it is not my intention to utter an eulogium on female virtue. I am called upon to plead the cauſe of childhood, helpleſs poverty and misfortune. And if I have been ſomewhat diffuſe on this pleaſing ſubject, I was led into it by the pathetic ſtory of my text, and a hope, that by exhibiting a few inſtances of the ſex's virtue, they would not, on the preſent occaſion, be unmindful of their dignity, but, like the amiable daughter of Pharaoh, feel for the diſtreſſes of childhood.

To excel in virtue is to excel in the beſt of cauſes; and, of all the virtues that adorn a chriſtian, charity is ſurely the moſt diſtinguiſhed. The word, in its original, implies every thing that is gracious, amiable, or benevolent; almſgiving is but one of its fruits; its pureſt ſource, therefore, is ſenſibility; ſenſibility guided by prudence, and cheriſhed by reaſon and religion. A virtue derived from

from ſuch principles, cannot but be moſt acceptable to the all-bountiful Father of the univerſe, who ſcatters ſuch innumerable bleſſings over the face of nature, and whoſe providential care and mercy extend to all created beings; "whoſe love is "perfect;" who feeds the raven, and clothes the lamb, and who maketh his ſun to riſe, and his rain to fall, indiſcriminately, upon the juſt and upon the unjuſt. Accordingly we find the whole ſtreſs of practical religion is laid on the exerciſe of this great virtue. "The end "of the commandment is charity," ſays the apoſtle, in his epiſtle to Timothy. Again, "pure religion, and undefiled "before God and the Father," ſays St. James, "is this—To viſit the fatherleſs "and widows in their affliction, and to "keep himſelf unſpotted from the world." No wonder then that St. Paul ſhould prefer it to faith and hope, and affirm that it "is the bond of perfectneſs."

But it is to be lamented, that the iniquities of the world have ſerved to render this moſt amiable of virtues, in ſome meaſure, inefficacious, and diverted it from its proper object. The benevolent heart of charity has often been open to the diſſembling cant of beggary; and the lazy hypocrite has been relieved, while the fatherleſs and widow have wanted bread. Our ſtreets ſwarm with wretches whoſe trade it is to abuſe the generoſity of thoſe, who are always alive to the cry of ſorrow, and the complaint of wretchedneſs. Idleneſs has often extorted, by counterfeit diſtreſs, the tribute which has been denied to poor, but uncomplaining induſtry; and the heart of pity has often bled for the imagined woes of hypocriſy, but paſſed by objects of real miſery, untouched, who have pined, perhaps, for want of food, but languiſhed out their lives in ſilence. Others, who really may be in diſtreſs, have, too often, I fear, brought it on themſelves by their own

vice

vice and folly. Wretches there are, grown old and feeble in the practice of wickedneſs; the miſerable ruins of lewdneſs and debauchery; ſuch, it is true, are entitled to our pity, but it muſt be pity mingled with averſion inſtead of reſpect. It is miſery without either innocence or dignity to ſupport it, and can only come recommended to us by the contrition of repentance. Charity to ſuch objects is attended only with the cold ſatisfaction of having done that "which ought not to "have been left undone." It is enlivened by none of thoſe emotions that melt the heart to tenderneſs; none of thoſe feelings that, in an inſtant, prompt the hand to give and diſpoſe the ſoul to love.

SUBJECT to be impoſed upon by ſuch various and complicated arts of diſſimulation as are practiſed in the world daily, in what ſure channel may the rich tide of benevolence flow, without danger of being diverted into ſome uſeleſs or improper courſe? Where is it that we can-

not be deceived? Where can we be assured, that while we relieve indigence we do not encourage vice, but, on the contrary, cherish virtue?

THERE is no deceit in innocence; there is no hypocrisy to be feared from the helplessness of childhood; those whose tender years require the governance of others; who are strangers to the world, and untainted with habits of wickedness, can never cheat you with the appearance of misery, nor impose on honest credulity, the fabricated tale of falsehood. Here too, all is open to our knowledge; we know them poor; we know them helpless; we are assured, also, that no vice or fault on their parts brought them to misery and want; but their only crime was to be born to poverty and misfortune. You will remember too, they are not Hebrews' children; they are not the offspring of our bond-slaves or our enemies; but the sons and daughters of our fellow-citizens, professing the same religion, and subject to

to the ſame laws. There needs no other motive, ſurely, to awaken pity; and let no one pretend to charity, who can be deaf to ſuch calls; for here, the generous ſpirit of chriſtian love may diffuſe its benevolence, unchecked by cautious prudence, and unreſtained by ſuſpicious fears. Farther, it may be neceſſary for us to reflect, that charity to children, is one of the few benevolent actions within our power, which neither the malice, nor ill-nature of the world, can well miſinterpret, or aſcribe to unworthy motives. There can be no perſonal intereſt in relieving a child; nothing ſelfiſh can be imputed to the practice of ſuch a virtue. He can neither contribute to our pleaſures, by flattering vanity, or promoting our intereſts; nor indulge paſſion, by adminiſtering to our wants. We can only enjoy the ſecret approbation of our own hearts, in giving food and raiment to poverty, and, what is of ſtill higher importance, in guarding innocence from danger, and leading infant virtue into the

paths of ſcience and of ſocial duty. We may be highly gratified in ſeeing thoſe helpleſs little ones, who now enjoy our bounty, thrive and flouriſh under its benignant influence, as the tender plants and flowers of the ſpring are foſtered, by the mild virtues of the morning heat, and the kind refreſhment of the evening dews. Hereafter we may have the happineſs, perhaps, of ſeeing them fill the moſt uſeful occupations of life, with credit and advantage. In the ſtrange viciſſitude of human affairs, who knows to what eminence ſome may in future riſe, though now depreſſed by poverty, and dependent for their ſubſiſtence on the kindneſs of their fellow-creatures? If not to the dignity of ſenators or warriors, yet they may riſe to the dignity of good men; they may become worthy members of ſociety, and learn to diſcharge the kind offices of a fond parent, an affectionate huſband, and a faithful friend. They may learn to do this, and bleſs thoſe, whoſe charity reminds them from what

ſource their merit and their virtue ſprung. Nor will there be wanting, I hope, among their young companions, their ſiſters in misfortune, ſome who will poſſeſs virtues correſponding with their brothers, and add, moreover a heart of ſenſibility, kind as the amiable daughter's in the text, to feel for the diſtreſſes of others, and endear the hours of ſocial life.

BESIDES, there is ſomething peculiarly powerful over the heart in the claims which children have to our benevolence. They are young adventurers on the ocean of life, ignorant of what adverſe winds may blow, and what dangerous rocks may lie in their way. As ſuch, who, that knows what life is, can regard them with indifference? Nature, indeed, ever wiſe, has ſo ordained it, that we cannot well attend to their manners, their innocent purſuits, the progreſs of their paſſions, and the early operations of their minds, without aſſociating with them ideas of tenderneſs. We ſee them pleaſed with the

little proſpects that lie before them, becauſe experience has not yet taught them the anguiſh of diſappointment. Happy in the trifling joys that nature has ſuited to their years, they are as careleſs of the world and its affairs as the "lilies of the "field that neither toil nor ſpin." Supremely bleſſed in thoſe ſpirits which heaven gave them, as yet unbroken by calamity, they are ſtrangers to the painful intruſions of fear, they ſee not the diſtant ſtorm that gathers round their heads, and think that "ſufficient unto the day is the "evil thereof." Who would not ſtretch out a friendly hand to ſuch objects, that they may ſtill "go on in their way re-"joicing?" Who does not wiſh to guard the human mind in this ſtate againſt the firſt aſſaults of vice, and ſave it from miſery, guilt and ruin? We ſhould ſurely protect thoſe firſt who have had no opportunity of protecting themſelves, and whoſe diſtreſſes always ſpring from their misfortunes, not their crimes. Youth alſo is the ſeaſon for diſcipline.

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The diſpoſitions of the mind are then flexible and eaſy. No miſtaken principles have added obſtinacy to ignorance; no length of time has confirmed them in ill habits, or rendered them callous to the feelings of humanity. This is the fertile ſoil, which, if neglected, produces only thorns and briars to choke the growing ſeed of every virtue; but if properly cultivated, may prove, under the bleſſing of providence, "that good ground which "bringeth forth fruit an hundred-fold."

SUCH are the conſiderations which make children the peculiar objects of our charity, whenever they are ſurrounded by poverty and misfortune; and ſuch were the motives, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that humanity ſuggeſted to Pharaoh's daughter, when ſhe ſaw the poor infant caſt among the ſedges, that grew near the river's bank, helpleſs and forſaken! No wonder that ſhe had compaſſion on him; notwithſtanding the cruel decree of her father, virtue could overcome power; but

but then the object of her pity was, of all others, perhaps, the moſt powerful over a feeling heart. It was helpleſs innocence! Innocence, forced to be abandoned even by a mother's fondneſs, that cried for pity, and was about to periſh. Who could reſiſt the powerful impulſe? Surely no one—therefore, "when ſhe had "opened it," ſays the inſpired writer of his own misfortunes, "ſhe ſaw the child, "and behold the babe wept, and ſhe "had compaſſion on him, and ſhe ſaid," doubtleſs in the true accents of pity, "this is one of the Hebrews' children."

THE ſame object that wakened kindneſs in the boſom of Pharaoh's daughter, now calls for yours; the circumſtances only are different, the objects are the ſame; both are innocence and childhood, misfortune and diſtreſs; and, though no tyrant expoſes thoſe to periſh on the wide waters, whom your care protects, yet how many of them, it may be feared, would be in as bad, if not a worſe condition, were the

the bleſſings of charity withheld from them? Sunk in miſery, ſome, perhaps, might die unpitied and unheard of in ſolitary anguiſh, and ſome, wearied with their diſtreſſes, and ſick of life, might, in the gloomy madneſs of deſpair, ruſh on their own deſtruction: while others, tainted with early vices, might abandon themſelves to every ſpecies of villainy, at length, die an ignominious death, and diſgrace that community, to which they might have been at once a credit and ſupport.

EMBRACE then the happy occaſion, which ſurely returns not too often, of being charitable with a certainty of being uſeful. While others run round with giddy delight, in a continual whirl of pleaſure; while they indulge themſelves in every unmeaning, deſpicable amuſement, and flock, without a bluſh, to the luxurious banquets of diſſipation; may you, at leaſt, while ſuch objects are before you, indulge yourſelves in "the luxury

" ury of doing good." Conſider that more heart-felt ſatisfaction attends one ſingle mite that is dedicated to virtue, than all the profuſion of wealth that is ſquandered away in idle oſtentation, or faſhionable exceſſes. Here enjoyment is united with duty; and we never commend ourſelves more effectually to the " Father " of all mercies," than when, by our active benevolence, we contribute to the happineſs and welfare of our fellow-creatures. Theſe are holy ſatisfactions that never will deſert us. Theſe are pleaſures immortal as our intellectual natures. No power or chance ſhall ever deprive us of them; for we are told, " though tongues " ſhall ceaſe, and knowledge ſhall vaniſh " away, yet charity ſhall never fail." She will never fail to comfort us, when this world and all its enjoyments begin to fade away. Yes, when the mind, deſtitute of all other ſupport, but what is derived from religion, and the retroſpect of a well-ſpent life, languiſhes on the bed of ſickneſs, and looks forward to the certain approach of death,

death; "then ſhall our prayers and our "alms go up for a memorial before God."

THUS far, I have chiefly appealed to your reaſon and your humanity; permit me now, as briefly as poſſible, to urge the practice of charity to children, on a more ſacred ground, and appeal to you as Chriſtians.

OUR bleſſed Lord, on this occaſion, as on moſt others, has taught us our duty both by precept and example. He knew the wants of childhood; he knew their helpleſſneſs; and that they could neither recommend themſelves to notice and ſupport, by contributing to men's pleaſures or promoting their intereſts. Innocence is their claim to protection; and ſtrong as it is, at all times, is, notwithſtanding, doubly ſo, when ſurrounded with diſtreſs. The Saviour of mankind knew this; and though he who had not where "to lay his own head," could neither miniſter to them food or raiment, yet,

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to manifeſt his affection for them, he did that which was much better; "he took "them up in his arms, put his hands "upon them, and bleſſed them," ſays the holy evangeliſt. Still further to make known his love, and to inculcate this divine principle of charity, he recommended them to the kindneſs of all the world, and that, ſurely, in the ſtrongeſt manner, when he told mankind, that "whoſoever receiveth one ſuch little "child in my name, receiveth me." Again, he gives us to underſtand, that even the ſmalleſt bounty to children, ſhall not paſs without an ample recompence from heaven; for, ſays he, in another place, "whoſoever ſhall give to "drink unto one of theſe little ones, "a cup of cold water in the name of "a diſciple, verily I ſay unto you, he "ſhall, in no wiſe, loſe his reward." But, would you have the reward of this heavenly virtue ſhewn in a ſtill more glorious point of view? Let me rehearſe to you part of the grand and ſolemn ſcene

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of the laſt judgment, as delivered to us by the Saviour of the world himſelf, in the ſublimeſt and moſt beautiful manner.

" WHEN," ſays he, " the Son of man " ſhall come in his glory, and all the " holy angels with him, then ſhall he " ſit upon his throne, and before him " ſhall be gathered all nations; and he " ſhall ſeparate them one from another, " as a ſhepherd divideth his ſheep from " the goats. Then ſhall the King ſay " unto them on his right hand, Come, " ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the " kingdom prepared for you from the " beginning of the world: For I was " an hungered, and ye gave me meat, I " was thirſty and ye gave me drink; I " was a ſtranger, and ye took me in; " naked, and ye clothed me; I was ſick, " and ye viſited me; I was in priſon, and " ye came unto me." Then ſhall the righteous anſwer him, ſaying, " Lord, when " ſaw we thee an hungered and fed thee? " or thirſty, and gave thee drink? when

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" ſaw we thee a ſtranger, and took thee " in? or naked, and clothed thee? or " when ſaw we thee ſick, or in priſon, " and came unto thee? And the King " ſhall anſwer and ſay unto them, Verily " I ſay unto you, inaſmuch as ye have " done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe " my brethren, ye have done it unto " me."

THIS, then, is the laſt motive that can be urged to chriſtians; with this, therefore, let me cloſe my diſcourſe. It would be ſuperfluous to multiply arguments; after ſuch a motive they would rather degrade, than exalt the ſubject; for what appeal, either to the underſtanding or the heart will be heard, if the Son of God ſpeaks in vain? He has clearly pointed out our duty with all that majeſtic ſimplicity, and artleſs grandeur, which characterize his holy goſpel. I have only to hope that our practice, particularly on the preſent occaſion, will correſpond with our profeſſion. " For what doth it profit,

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" my brethren," ſays the apoſtle James, " though a man ſay he hath faith, and " have not works? Can faith ſave him? " If a brother or a ſiſter," continues he, " be naked and deſtitute of daily food, " and one of you ſay unto them, depart " in peace, be ye warmed, and be ye " filled; notwithſtanding ye give them " not the things which are needful to " the body; what doth it profit?" Let us not then be like thoſe, who honored God with their lips, but whoſe hearts were far from him; but let us remember, that " faith without works is dead," and that, " if we know theſe things and do " them not, the greater will be our con- " demnation."

# SERMON VI.

2 COR. V. 10.

*For we muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

THE reſurrection of the body and a future judgment have always been the hope of every good man, and the fear of every bad one. The wicked Felix, we are told, trembled at this awful proſpect, while the holy apoſtle looked forward to it with joy, as to the crown, and conſummation of his bliſs. There ſeems to

be ſomething implanted in our nature, independent of what we gather from divine revelation and the exerciſe of our faculties, which tells us that we ſhall exiſt hereafter, and makes us ſhrink back with horror at the thought of annihilation.

But ſome of the moſt eminent of the heathen writers have proved the reaſonableneſs of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, on the footing of natural reaſon. Wherever they turned their eyes, to whatever object they directed their enquiries, whether they contemplated the vegetable ſyſtem, or looked abroad into the animal world, they could perceive that the greateſt wiſdom, juſtice and mercy pervaded the great Creator's works. His providential care and protection were ſeen, as well in the covering that ſhielded the tender bud from the cold till it had no further need of it, as in the means which the moſt inſignificant reptile was provided with for procuring food, and preſerving its ſpecies. There appeared no ſeeming injuſtice,

but what they could reconcile, and they ſaw no reaſon to doubt the wiſdom, or the goodneſs of God, when they employed their thoughts on any thing but on the human race. It was there alone that they could perceive diſorder, irregularity and confuſion. The planets were conſtant to their courſes; the ſeaſons preſerved their due change; the plants, the herbs, the flowers appeared and diſappeared, bloomed and faded at their ſtated and appointed ſeaſons. The animal creation, too, were conſtant to the laws by which they ever had, and, doubtleſs, ever will be governed. The bird was directed to form her neſt of the ſame materials and at the ſame time. The bee gathered her honey and framed her comb, without variation or improvement, and the beaſt made no progreſs towards any perfection, but was governed by fixed and determinate laws, which preſerved his conduct invariably the ſame. All ſeemed to act together for the preſervation of beauty and order; all, but man, were regulated by the divine pro-

vidence and rendered ſubſervient to certain laws, from which they could not vary or depart.

The human race alone were ſubject to accidental miſery, confuſion and diſorder. But why was this? Becauſe, as they might have rightly concluded, men were endowed with a freedom of acting, and, as free agents, eminently diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the creation. Inſtead of being over-ruled or controuled by any ſupernatural power, they had the God-like faculties of reaſon and conſcience beſtowed upon them to direct their conduct and govern their actions. By the help of theſe, they were continually making gradual advances towards perfection, and, in proportion as they ſuffered themſelves to be governed by their dictates, they proceeded in moral excellence and ſocial virtue. But the abuſe of theſe excellent gifts by men, who in all ages gave way to the weakneſſes of their nature, and forſook the paths of rectitude, frequently produced partial miſery, and

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debaſed the human character with vice and meanneſs, injuſtice and oppreſſion. Now, though it could not be believed that an all-wiſe, all-juſt, and all-bountiful God, would extend his divine favor to the meaneſt part of the creation, and withhold it from his nobleſt creature, man; yet vice was frequently ſeen to triumph, unpuniſhed, over virtue, and to trample upon ſocial duty; wickedneſs was frequently crowned with proſperity, while goodneſs pined in poverty, and was ſometimes expoſed to all the miſeries of life. This they could not account for, or reconcile to the known attributes of the Deity, any otherwiſe than by looking forward into futurity, and determining that there muſt be ſome future period of exiſtence for mankind, in which they would be either miſerable or happy, according to their conduct while here. Hence, the language of heathen poetry is, that the virtuous, the pious and the brave inhabit Elyſium, and the wicked are tormented in Tartarus.

But though they could perceive that men ought to be accountable for their actions here, in another world, by the force of natural reaſon, yet they knew not how this could be. It was too great a myſtery for human underſtanding to inveſtigate or explain; but, though their reaſon was inadequate to ſo great a taſk, they had modeſty and good ſenſe enough not to reject their perſuaſion on this account; ſince they could look abroad into nature and diſcover many phænomena equally wonderful, and equally beyond their comprehenſion. The ſpringing of a plant and the formation of animals, were to them, myſteries as great, we might reaſonably ſuppoſe, as the reſurrection of the body; ſince they would no ſooner have believed the one than the other, if the information of their ſenſes had not convinced them of the latter. The vain and trifling argument, therefore, that this great doctrine is incomprehenſible, ſeems to have been of very little weight with the wiſeſt of the heathens, though they had no aſſiſt-

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ance from divine revelation to aſſiſt their enquiries, nor any teſtimonies from above to ſettle their opinion. They had knowledge and reaſon ſufficient to make them hope it, but they can hardly be ſaid to have had enough to make them believe it. They could not proceed with any certainty on ſo myſterious a ſubject, nor rely upon their own reaſon, in an affair of ſuch great importance, with any ſafety. We need not wonder, therefore, that numberleſs ſuperſtitions ſhould be admitted by them, through fear of not acting right, and a ſenſe of their own ignorance and incapacity.

VARIOUS, indeed, were the diſputes, and various were the ſyſtems that were formed, on this great ſubject, in moſt of the known nations of the world. Some believed, ſome hoped, ſome ſcrupled, and ſome diſbelieved. Even the Jews themſelves, who had the aſſiſtance of the ſacred volume to determine their minds, were divided into ſects on this important doctrine. The Phariſees, a numerous ſect, believed it,

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and the Sadducees, another numerous ſect, diſbelieved it.

It was reſerved for the bleſſed Saviour of the world to clear away all this ſuperſtition and error, all theſe doubts and diſputes, and to "bring life and immortality to "light, through his holy goſpel." He has there diſcloſed to us, in ſome meaſure, the long hidden ſecrets of the future and inviſible world, and explained to us the manner of the reſurrection; that all men ſhall riſe again with their bodies at the laſt day, and receive the final ſentence, which dooms them to eternal happineſs or eternal miſery, according to their works. He has been particular in deſcribing to us this laſt awful judgment, and in preſenting to us the joys of heaven, and the torments of the wicked. By this he has added the ſtrongeſt incitements to virtue, and laid the moſt effectual reſtraint upon vice. He has likewiſe, by this, glorified his heavenly Father in vindicating his divine attributes, and given, beſides, ſuch comfort to the poor, the

the afflicted and unfortunate, as no chance can deprive them of, and no power deſtroy. The pious too, and the juſt, the charitable and humane, have now the joy and ſatisfaction to know, that the reward of all their goodneſs is not confined to the trifling and uncertain bleſſings of this world; but that a heavenly crown of happineſs and glory is prepared for them, which ſhall never know decay.

But this moſt excellent and moſt ſacred ſyſtem of moral and religious duty, the holy goſpel, has not been, it muſt be lamented, and is not, at this preſent time, without its enemies and oppoſers. Not the excellence of its doctrines, the heavenly example of its ever-ſacred Author, nor the unfeigned zeal and ſufferings of all its firſt profeſſors, can gain it univerſal credit, or procure it general reverence. Many have been miſled by vanity or by pride, ſome have been deluded by mere "ſcoffers at "the word of God;" by men, who have endeavoured to make others laugh at every thing

thing that is ſacred, and who have either ignorantly, or wilfully,, miſconſtrued texts of ſcripture to make out contradiction; while others have been driven into infidelity by their fears. Nor is this ſtrange. He that never knew the exalted ſatisfactions of piety, that finds no conſolation from the exerciſe of chriſtian virtues, but, on the contrary, is often haunted, perhaps, with the remembrance of guilt; he who can enjoy no pleaſure, but in the indulgence of appetites which he knows to be vicious, and no ſatisfaction but what a life of profaneneſs and impiety affords, can have little proſpect of happineſs from a ſyſtem whoſe firſt object is to purify the heart from ſin, promote the great duties of ſocial life, and enforce the conſtant reverence of the Deity. How happy will he be then to embrace any perſuſion that will free him from theſe reſtraints! How gladly will he ſubſcribe to that creed, which curtails him of no vicious pleaſure, which lays upon him no injunctions that he fears to violate, and baniſhes from his mind all the terrors

terrors of a future judgment! Every mean equivocation, and every wretched ſophiſtry, will to him wear the appearance of argument and truth, and carry with them conviction. Men there are of this deſcription, who, when they have convinced themſelves, as they vainly hope, and perhaps believe, are not content to keep their wretched and deplorable perſuaſions to themſelves, but are continually attempting to juſtify their conduct, and ſcattering doubts in the minds of others; the young, the ignorant and profligate, generally are their prey. But there can be no great merit in overcoming thoſe, who, if they can make any reſiſtance, are not diſpoſed to do it; nor can it afford any great gratification, one ſhould think, to their darling paſſion, their vanity, thus to deſtroy in others the greateſt motives to goodneſs, and ſet them free from all reſtraints of fear, ſince they might convince themſelves, if they would, that the weakneſſes of human nature will always contribute much more to the propagation

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of infidelity than any arguments which its profeſſors can advance.

But the chriſtian religion hath now been ſo long and peaceably eſtabliſhed among us, that men have careleſsly and contentedly embraced it, without examining into the evidence of its doctrines, or knowing the grounds on which they have believed them. Many, therefore, it muſt be lamented, have never been able to anſwer the common deſpicable objections of vain and wicked men; or ſupport that faith which they have been taught to profeſs. Hence, it is become neceſſary, in ſome meaſure, for the teachers of the holy goſpel, to lay the foundations of chriſtianity afreſh. The great doctrines of our bleſſed religion are not to be defended againſt the cavils of artful infidels by thoſe who have read the holy ſcriptures with little or no attention, nor can the evidence of them be grounded, in ſceptical minds, but by a diligent and careful examination of circum-

circumſtances as they relate to one another; by arguing from known and acknowledged facts, and conſidering them as they are connected with others, and have reference to thoſe perſons who were concerned in them.

HAVING therefore already given you the reaſons that made the ancients, from the light of nature, expect a future ſtate, I ſhall now conſider the teſtimonies which we have in the New Teſtament for the belief of this great doctrine, and argue from ſome very peculiar and providential circumſtances that attend them. By theſe means we ſhall ſee that our faith reſts on a foundation ſo firm that, in my opinion, no argument can ſhake it.

IN the mean time, let us remember, that of all the revelations made to man, the reſurrection of the body is by far the moſt important to our happineſs. On this the pureſt of all religions is built, and on this the rewards and puniſhments

of

of eternity are ſuſpended. We need no other argument therefore, ſurely, to give it our moſt ſerious and attentive conſideration, particularly at this ſolemn ſeaſon *, when the Saviour of the world vanquiſhed the power of death, "opened the gates of "everlaſting life, and became the firſt-fruits "of them that ſlept." Let us then proceed to examine the evidence of the holy goſpel.

It is well known that our bleſſed Lord preached the reſurrection of the body during his life-time. The proſpect of another world, too, was all the conſolation that his faithful followers had, after his death, for the diſtreſſes and calamities which they were to ſuffer in this. He was ſo very particular and circumſtantial on this important ſubject, that he publickly foretold the exact time in which he was to riſe from the dead. The Jews, ever eager to diſprove any of our Saviour's doctrines, thought they had now an opportunity of

* Preached on Eaſter-day.

ſubverting

ſubverting the very foundation of chriſtianity, by diſproving the great doctrine on which it was built. Therefore, St. Matthew tells us, that the "chief Prieſts "and Phariſees came together unto Pi-"late," after the crucifixion, "ſaying, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver "ſaid while he was yet alive, After three "days I will riſe again: Command, there-"fore, that the ſepulchre be made ſure "until the third day, leſt his diſciples "come by night, and ſteal him away, "and ſay unto the people, He is riſen "from the dead; ſo the laſt error ſhall "be worſe than the firſt. Pilate ſaid "unto them, ye have a watch, go your "way, make it as ſure as you can. So "they went and made the ſepulchre ſure, "ſealing the ſtone, and ſetting a watch." Here you ſee every precaution was uſed to convince the diſciples of their error. They rolled a great ſtone to the door of the ſepulchre; they ſealed it, that they might know if the tomb had been opened; and, that the hopes of his followers might be

finally diſappointed, they ſet a guard of ſoldiers about it. But all this, inſtead of ſubverting their faith, and putting a ſtop to the further progreſs of chriſtianity, ſerved to confirm it in the moſt eminent manner, as we ſhall ſoon perceive. For, when the Jews had taken all this care, and had been ſo very diligent and anxious to prevent the deluſion, as they thought, from ſpreading any further among the people, how eaſily would it have been effected, if, after the time appointed, which was only three days, they could have exhibited the pale and lifeleſs corpſe, which they had ſcourged and crucified, and while hanging on the croſs, had pierced to the heart! When all Judea was in an uproar, and theſe ſame chief prieſts trembled for fear of loſing the dignity and profit of their exalted ſtation, why did not they produce to his beloved diſciples this ſpectacle of horror? It was undoubtedly their intention in guarding the ſepulchre. This would, at once, have deſtroyed the whole ſyſtem, and ſilenced its

its profeſſors for ever; but this they could not do. For, early on the firſt day of the week (the very day on which he had foretold he ſhould riſe) we are informed there was a great earthquake; an angel, whoſe countenance was like lightning, and whoſe garment was white as ſnow, rolled back the ſtone and ſat upon it; the keepers ſhook for fear, and Jeſus roſe and departed. When the guards, ſtruck with terror and amazement, told the chief prieſts what had happened, how truly deſpicable and how dreadfully guilty was their conduct on this occaſion! Ever deaf to conviction and obſtinate in error, though in matters that concerned their eternal ſalvation, they bribed the ſoldiers largely to ſay, that while they fell aſleep his diſciples came by night and ſtole him away. Though, according to their own confeſſion, they were aſleep, yet they could poſitively affirm who they were that removed the body! A memorable inſtance of the inconſiſtence of falſhood, and the meanneſs of guilt. Thus defeated in their

greedy expectations, and now conſcious of their inhuman cruelty, they could deſcend to every mean, contemptible ſubterfuge, to juſtify their conduct and ſilence the clamours of the people.

But I am aware that there are ſome men who have ſo far impoſed upon themſelves, or have been miſled by others, as not to be ſatisfied with the teſtimony of the Evangeliſts on this head. Let us then ſuppoſe it really true, that his diſciples did ſteal him away by night. We can meet them on the ground of Judaiſm and infidelity, and, by arguing on the ſubject, as they themſelves repreſent it, we ſhall ſtill be able to vindicate our belief againſt all the artifices of vanity, and ſtratagems of guilt. The premiſe on which we muſt proceed in this affair, and which cannot be denied, is, that our Saviour's diſciples, if they ſtole the body from the tomb, muſt know, that their bleſſed maſter (let it even be ſuppoſed with reverence) told them and all the world a falſhood, when he preached

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to them the reſurrection of his body. They muſt know that he had deceived them in a point, which was to them of all others, the moſt important; ſince the promiſe of the reſurrection was what they chiefly relied on, as the reward of all their labors, their ſufferings and calamities. "If, ſays St. Paul, in this life only "we have hope in Chriſt, we are of all "men moſt miſerable." The reſurrection of the body and a future judgment were the principal foundation of their faith; for, ſays the ſame venerable apoſtle, "if "Chriſt be not riſen, then is our preach-"ing vain, and your faith is alſo vain." If they had been diſappointed, therefore, in this particular, the ſyſtem would certainly have fallen to the ground. But on the contrary, we find they preached it with the greateſt firmneſs, conſtancy and reſolution; they ſubmitted to the greateſt hardſhips, they endured the ſevereſt afflictions for the ſake of this great and fundamental article of their creed, and at laſt, to ſhew the whole world that they preached it with the

fulleſt conviction, they died martyrs to it, and ſealed the truth of their profeſſion with their blood. Now, that men would ſuffer death, rather than relinquiſh a belief which they had firmly perſuaded themſelves was true, is very probable. The hiſtories of all nations, indeed, will afford us many examples of poor and wretched enthuſiaſts who have fallen victims to an ill-founded zeal and local ſuperſtitions; we muſt not forget, however, that this zeal and theſe ſuperſtitions had been handed down to them, with the greateſt reverence, from their forefathers, and that they had been taught to embrace them, from their infancy, as ſacred and undoubted truths. But, that a whole body of men would willingly expoſe themſelves to the moſt imminent dangers and calamities, and, at laſt, ſuffer the moſt cruel deaths for the ſake of ſupporting a doctrine which they muſt know to be falſe (and in this predicament were all the apoſtles, if they ſtole the body from the tomb) is not only paſt credit, but is what has never been heard of. It is contrary

trary to all reaſon, and repugnant to human nature. What objections more have we to anſwer? Will any antichriſtian be bold and deſperate enough to aſcribe their conduct to any intereſted motives? Will they aſſert that riches and honors were their object? Alas! all the world knows they lived in poverty, and that both theſe were contradictory to that religion which they profeſſed with ſuch zeal and conſtancy. Will they affirm that a deſire of fame, and a wiſh to raiſe themſelves into popular favor, were their motives? They were men by no means addicted to ambition or to pride. They preached humility; and their hiſtory informs us, that their profeſſion expoſed them to all kinds of diſgrace, and inſtead of procuring them the comforts, brought on them all the ills of life. Beſides, had ambition, or the deſire of this world's honor, been the principle that governed their conduct, they never would have embraced that religion, which of all others, moſt ſtrongly condemns it; that religion which

none of its enemies have ever dared to charge with being interwoven with the ſchemes of policy, or contaminated with worldly purſuits. But I think the purity of their morals, and the innocence of their lives, are alone ſufficient to gain them the credit of every man, who is not miſled by vanity, or impoſed upon by fear.

THERE are however many more circumſtances, in the accounts of the holy apoſtles, which will ſerve to ſtrengthen and confirm this great doctrine of Chriſt's reſurrection; but what has been ſaid, perhaps, might be ſufficient, ſince the teſtimonies which I have confined myſelf to are ſuch as we have given to us by the enemies of chriſtianity. I cannot, however, forbear mentioning one more, which we have from the venerable ſaint Paul, who, though he was bred a Phariſee, and that in the ſtricteſt manner, from having been a perſecutor and blaſphemer, became not only a convert, but an apoſtle of Chriſt. He was a man of the firſt learning, and of ſome conſequence

conſequence in the Jewiſh nation; but after his miraculous converſion he forſook all; kindred, parents, fortune and country, for the ſake of Jéſus; no difficulties or dangers could ſuppreſs his active zeal, and no diſtreſſes could prevent him from preaching the holy goſpel to all nations. He will be ever conſidered as a ſtrong pillar of the chriſtian church. He has elucidated his bleſſed Maſter's precepts, and enforced his ſacred doctrines, with the greateſt eloquence and learning, in thoſe moſt excellent epiſtles which have been tranſmitted to us. There too we have a confirmation of the reſurrection of the dead; he told the Corinthians, that our Saviour was ſeen of above five hundred of the brethren at once, of whom (continued he) the greater part remain unto this preſent. And, let it be obſerved, we have no reaſon to believe that theſe men were brethren of the chriſtian church at the time they ſaw our Lord. St. Paul only affirms that they were brethren at the time of his writing that epiſtle to the

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Corinthians, (which was many years after Chriſt's reſurrection) and moſt probably they owed their converſion to the ocular demonſtration with which they were favored. Here then we perceive, that it was in the power of the greater part of five hundred men to contradict this aſſertion of St. Paul, at the time he made it. To ſuppoſe that ſo great a number would conſpire together to ſupport a falſhood, when there could be no motive for doing it, either from intereſt or from fear, is to ſuppoſe that men would yield to guilt without temptation, and become abandoned without reward.

SATISFIED, then, of the truth of this great doctrine, we muſt remember, that it was taught by the Saviour of the world to deter men from all vice, and eſtabliſh them in all virtue; to medicate the ills of human life, to comfort and ſupport the innocent, to terrify the guilty, and "to "juſtify the ways of God to man."

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LET it then have its due influence on our minds, by keeping us in the conſtant practice of virtue, and the unwearied exerciſe of every ſocial and religious duty. Whenever we might be tempted by our paſſions, our vanity, or pride, to deviate from that line of conduct which our own hearts approve, let us reſiſt the ſolicitation of every groveling appetite, by remembering, that "we muſt all appear before the "judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that every one "may receive the things done in his body, "according to that he hath done, whether "it be good or bad;" before that ſacred Judge who acted up to the perfection of human nature, and cannot be ſuppoſed to pardon the neglect of thoſe duties which he died to eſtabliſh; "knowing, there-"fore, the terrors of the Lord, let us be "perſuaded."

SER-

# SERMON VII.

1 Cor. xv. 35, 36.

*But ſome man will ſay, How are the dead raiſed up, and with what body do they come?*

*Thou fool, that which thou ſoweſt is not quickened except it die.*

THE Holy Apoſtle, in this grand chapter, enforces and explains the reſurrection of the body in the ſublimeſt ſtrains of inſpired eloquence. He condeſcends to anticipate the natural objection of unbelievers, in the words of the text, and with great propriety refers them to that analogous proof which the courſe of nature affords.

affords. Having already given you ſome of the many ſtriking, and, I think, unanſwerable reaſons which the goſpel diſpenſation, and the partial diſtribution of good and evil in this world afford of this awful event, our time may be profitably ſpent, in purſuing the argument which St. Paul has furniſhed us with, and conſidering how far the light of nature tends to confirm the promiſes of our Lord, and what the general plan of providence, as far as we can trace its diſpenſations, teaches us to expect.

MAN is a compound being, conſiſting of ſoul and body. The former we deem our ſpiritual part, the latter we are aſſured is material. The objection that we know not what ſpirit is, carries with it no force, as it may be applied with equal propriety to the eſſence of every ſubſtance in nature. It is ſufficient that we are conſcious of its exiſtence, and that we mean by it ſomething as remote from matter, as fire is from earth. Nothing can be more unreaſonable,

reaſonable, or more repugnant to common ſenſe, than the endeavour of ſome modern philoſophers to reduce the ſoul of man to the laws of matter, however the doctrine of materialiſm may be ſoftened by the ſuppoſition of curious organization, nice arrangement, and myſterious contrivances.

We form our ideas and judge of every thing around us by certain properties which diſtinguiſh them from others. Aſk the philoſopher why he claſſes every object in nature under the general definition of matter, he will anſwer, becauſe he can apply to them diviſibility, form, extenſion, attraction, and other properties common to bodies in general. But not one of theſe can be applied to the mind or ſoul of man. We cannot, for inſtance, give it the univerſal property of form. It is abſurd, in the higheſt degree, to ſuppoſe it round, or ſquare, or of any other figure. Nor can we limit it to any certain boundaries of ſpace; its volitions, if not ſelf-determined, often originate from too myſterious a ſource for inveſtigation, and its thoughts are ſo

rapid, that the lightning which darts from heaven to earth, is but a feeble illuſtration of their celerity. It admits the ideas of things and perſons exiſting at the diſtance of ten, or fifty thouſand miles as readily, and with as little exertion, as thoſe which are under the immediate obſervation of the ſenſes. So eminently diſtinguiſhed, therefore, by theſe, and many other attributes, is the ſoul from mere matter, that to confound them, ſeems, if we may judge from the knowledge we have of it, as abſurd as to argue that motion and ſpace are the ſame; or that the properties, which are common to heavy bodies, may be applied to thought. Much ſtreſs has been laid on a mere ſuppoſition of a great philoſopher, indeed, that omnipotence *could* endow matter with a thinking faculty. To talk of poſſibilities, with regard to the Deity, is talking of what we know nothing about. To limit omnipotence is evidently to deſtroy the very idea of it. It is our humble lot to "know only in "part," to "ſee as through a glaſs "darkly;"

" darkly;" to govern our lives by thoſe gracious aſſiſtances which the Almighty Father hath afforded us, and where certainty is not to be obtained, to act with experience and probability in our favor. Taking it for granted then, as I do not wiſh to lead you into the unprofitable diſcuſſion of metaphyſical ſubtilties, that the ſoul of man is ſomething diſtinct from his body, let us fairly conſider, how far it is probable, from the nature of things, that we ſhall exiſt hereafter, when the body is deſtroyed, or diſſolved by death.

THE Deity hath been graciouſly pleaſed to ſcatter throughout the creation innumerable objects that teach us many uſeful truths, and many important duties of life. The ant and bee have long been conſidered as emblems of laudable induſtry and provident wiſdom. The ſucceſſion of the four ſeaſons mark, with peculiar beauty, the different ſtages of life. The bud that bloſſoms, the fruit that ripens, and the leaf that drops and withers away, bids us

alſo look forward to that period when our frail tenement, according to the invariable law of nature, ſhall moulder into duſt. The analogy of the animal and vegetable world ſeems likewiſe to point out a future ſtate of exiſtence, and clears the myſterious ſubject of the reſurrection from many of its ſuppoſed difficulties. The ſeed which is buried in the ground is endowed with a vital principle (if I may ſo expreſs myſelf) which exiſts and ſprings up into life, as the Apoſtle obſerved, when the bulk and external appearance is diſſolved. The ſubject is familiarized to us through the works of God. We are accuſtomed to ſee different animals and inſects of the earth paſs through various modes of exiſtence. The bird burſts the ſhell, and enjoys a life as diſtinct from its former, as can well be imagined; the ſluggiſh worm that crawls upon the earth, after paſſing through a temporary death, to all appearance, becomes a fly, and roves at large through the expanſe of heaven. Even we ourſelves have exiſted for a ſhort period before

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our birth, when, as well as during the helpleſs ſtate of infancy, we could form no notion or expectation of the preſent enlarged mode of being we experience, nor have the leaſt conſciouſneſs of the improved ſtate of all our faculties. Thus far, then, we can perceive there is nothing inconſiſtent, but, on the contrary, highly analogous to the general plan of nature, in the ſuppoſition that we ſhall exiſt after death. The preſent life appears only another ſtage of exiſtence; a field of difficulty, danger and trial to prove our merits, and prepare us for a more durable ſtate. This view of things, but faintly ſhadowed out, indeed, in the contemplation of the works of nature, will receive additional light from an attentive conſideration of the ſoul, its faculties, its ſatisfactions, its wiſhes and purſuits.

In ſleep, when the ſenſes are locked up, and the body is in a ſtate of forgetfulneſs, the ſoul wanders through worlds of her own creating, ſees things and perſons

without the eye's aſſiſtance, admits ideas of pleaſure and of pain, with all the livelineſs and force of reality; reflects on them, and draws concluſions from them. However myſterious, in ſome reſpects, the union of this divine principle within us may be with the body, we do not find that the loſs of one, two, or more limbs, can deſtroy, or impair its faculties. Indeed, we have inſtances of men producing the moſt vigorous proofs of genius and mental perfection, when the body has been waſted with diſeaſe, and ſinking by ſure and gradual decay into the grave. Many alſo, to the very moment of their departure from the world, retain their mental powers in full perfection. In addition to theſe remarks let it be remembered, that one of the greateſt mathematicians this country has to boaſt of was born blind; and the poet eminently diſtinguiſhed for uniting the brilliancy of fancy with the moſt perfect elegance and refined taſte, paſſed his whole life in a ſtate of corporal weakneſs, diſeaſe and pain. It is by no means probable, therefore,

therefore, that the ſoul, whoſe exiſtence ſeems, in many caſes, to be ſo independent of the body, ſhould be annihilated by death. It is contrary to the direct courſe of nature. Were they ſo intimately combined, were the law of their union ſo ſtrict, that what diſſolves the one, muſt neceſſarily diſſolve the other, we ſhould invariably ſee them decay together, and approach the period of their diſſolution by a regular and uniform progreſs. Experience teaches us that when the trunk begins to die away, the branches alſo die with it, the leaves drop, and the bloſſoms fade.

FARTHER, it muſt be particularly obſerved, that for many reaſons, the ſhort period of human life ſeems by no means adequate, or proper boundaries for the ſoul's exiſtence. Moſt of the objects in nature have their proper and diſtinct uſes aſſigned them. Beyond theſe they anſwer no end, apparent to us, nor is it neceſſary that they ſhould. The plant ſprings up,

yields its ſeed and dies. The brute arrives at a point of perfection, beyond which he would never paſs, were his exiſtence protracted to the end of time. Beſides the appetites of hunger and thirſt, which are neceſſary to ſupport his being, and thoſe inſtincts by which the ſpecies is continued, he feels no other wants from nature, performs the taſk impoſed on him by man, and dies. Nothing of this holds true with regard to the human ſoul. This world admits of no point of perfection where it muſt be at a ſtand, or beyond which it cannot paſs. The memory is ever open to admit ideas that have ſufficient novelty, judgment will combine them with infinite variety, and the imagination is ever ready to ſoar beyond the reach of our ſenſes, and the limits of ſublunary nature. Of the endleſs diverſity of characters that croud the univerſe, pitch upon which ever you will, and you will find, upon enquiry, that this world affords him no ſettled point of reſt, beyond which he does not aſpire. There is no rank, or ſtation, in which all his wiſhes

can be compleatly gratified, and the end of his being fully anſwered. The ambitious man finds his views enlarged, in proportion as his predominant paſſion is gratified; and Alexander, after he had ſubdued, with his military barbarians, the whole human race, as he vainly thought, ſighed that there were no more worlds for him to conquer. With the pious man, all around him is vanity, when compared with the glorious objects in view. "He runs, in-"deed, the race that is ſet before him," but "preſſes on towards the mark," and ſighs for the rewards of immortality. Even the more moderate, thoſe whoſe wiſhes and purſuits are confined within narrower limits, and who think that when they have acquired the comforts of life, they could be content to paſs the remainder of their days in peace and tranquility; in the ſatisfactions of friendſhip, the exerciſe of benevolence and the innocent indulgence of rational purſuits. Even they always find their ſchemes of felicity imperfect, and their enjoyments often diſturbed.

The ſoul either wiſhes, after ſhort experience, to ſhew its good-will to man in a larger ſphere, or ſighs for longer time to execute ſome favorite plans of action, and to ſee their happy effects. Sometimes death interferes alſo, takes from us thoſe whoſe friendſhip, whoſe virtues and endearments formed the baſis of our happineſs, and bids us look abroad for new objects of hope and ſatisfaction. The votary of ſcience, after ſtudious and minute reſearches into the laws of nature, and the infinite variety of her works, ſees the proſpect widen as he proceeds; on he journies, with freſh delight, as he diſcovers new beauty, new relations, and a more regular order of things ariſe, but complains that he is forced away juſt as he has taken an imperfect glance. The ſtudent who wiſhes to follow the operations of providence in the moral government of the world, who longs to trace the mazes of paſſion, become acquainted with his own heart, and reconciled to the lot of humanity, has only ſufficient time to ſettle his habits of thought and principles of

action,

action, to admire the greatneſs, the goodneſs and wiſdom of his divine Creator, before he quits the ſcene for ever. With every human being there is always ſomething wanting here, ſomething more durable, ſomething higher, ſomething greater, leſs ſubject to accidents, and more excellent in its nature. Hence, then, originates the thought, the wiſh and expectation of immortality. And can we think this all deluſion? Would a good and gracious God diſcloſe ſources of ſuperior happineſs to us, juſt let us ſip of them while adulterated with the bitter cup of miſery and the impure alloy of mortality, and then withdraw them from our lips for ever! It cannot be. It ſeems a point in which not only his goodneſs and wiſdom, but even his truth and juſtice are concerned. Would he ſend a ſpirit endowed with ſuch capacities of pleaſure, virtue and improvement to hover over the earth, for a ſhort period, like an *ignis fatuus*, and then extinguiſh it for ever! Impoſſible. If we may aſcribe any degree of

ſatisfaction

ſatisfaction to the everlaſting Father, ariſing from the creation of Man, it can be attributed to no cauſe ſo worthy, as that of viewing a human ſoul under the diſpenſation of his providence, advancing through trials, difficulties and dangers towards the perfection of its nature, till at length, by ſubduing temptation, paſſing through the needful diſcipline of life, and fulfilling the meaſure of obedience required, it becomes worthy to aſſociate with angels, and to be admitted into the preſence of its Creator.

Let it further be remarked, in confirmation of the ſoul's immortality, that throughout the whole univerſe of being, we have not an inſtance, even in the material world, of annihilation preſented to our obſervation. We know not what it is in any thing. It is only a term adapted, like many others, to the imperfection of human knowledge. The moſt perfect diſſolution that the operations of nature and the effects of art diſcover to us, only produces

duces a change, or mutation of being. The fuel we burn, for inſtance, is partly reduced to aſhes, and the fumes that aſcend into the air, though wafted through the atmoſphere by the winds, are condenſed into vapor, which at length comes down again, and ſtill continues its agency in temperating the elements with ſalutary moiſture, and nouriſhing the fruits of the earth.

As it appears, therefore, that no cauſe in nature is ſufficient to produce the deſtruction of any material ſubſtance whatever, can we with any probability, or any analogy to the plan of providence by which this world is governed, ſuppoſe, for a moment, that the diſſolution of our mere material frame ſhould finally deſtroy the ſoul? Can we indulge a thought that the ſpirit placed within us, which has none of the properties that render matter ſubject, if not to abſolute decay, yet to infinite diviſibility and change, ſhould ever loſe its conſciouſneſs and powers of thought? Its volition

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and reflection? Its hopes and fears, its ſenſe of pleaſure and of pain? There is nothing like argument to ſupport ſo gloomy a perſuaſion.

THESE then are ſome of the many ſcattered lights, which, when collected together, ſeem to afford us ſufficient reaſon to expect, that this life is only the dawn of our being. The feeble rays which gleam around us from afar, ſhine with increaſing luſtre, as we dwell on them with ſtedfaſt attention, and evidently promiſe a brighter day.

THIS glorious truth our bleſſed Lord and Saviour has firmly eſtabliſhed, by "bring-"ing life and immortality to light through "his holy goſpel." He knew that this grand and awful doctrine, reſted, before his coming into the world, on too weak a foundation. The ignorant and wretched might, indeed, occaſionally have indulged a wavering hope of immortality, but it required the ſteady thought and calm meditation

ditation of the philoſopher to penetrate the ſhades of futurity, and look forward, with any certainty, to that final ſtate of retribution, in which every one ſhall be rewarded or puniſhed according to his works.

To extend this bleſſed truth, therefore, to all mankind, to render it a principle of practical virtue, piety, benevolence and truth, was one great object of our Lord's miſſion. He has confirmed it by his own reſurrection, and pointed out the means of rendering it a crown of glory to us, that ſhall never fade away. The means are what might naturally be expected for the occaſion; the exerciſe of the ſoul in goodneſs, and every duty that regards ourſelves, our neighbour, or the Deity. We are therefore commanded, as the fundamental duties of life, to love one another, to ſubmit with humility under the diſpenſations of providence, "to run the race "that is ſet before us, however arduous;

"to

" to do juſtice, love mercy, and walk " humbly with our God."

To influence the heart with devout love, and to diſpoſe the ſoul with willing obedience, to perform the duties that are required of us, the evidence of nature and of reaſon, joined to the divine illumination of the goſpel, muſt be deemed fully ſufficient for every honeſt enquirer. Thoſe feeble lights which, like the diſtant ſtars, but faintly glimmered on the naked eye, appear, through the glorious revelation of Chriſt, like the planets moving in their reſpective orbits, as diſcovered by the teleſcopes of art. But as I have fully enlarged on the wonderful teſtimonies which the goſpel affords of our reſurrection, in the preceding diſcourſe, I ſhall not dwell on them any longer here. Permit me only to obſerve, that the ſublime doctrine of the ſoul's immortality, ſets human nature in the grandeſt and moſt dignified point of view. It leads us through the paths

paths of virtue and religion, to the ſociety of angels and the exalted happineſs of heaven. It applies, with equal force, to every principle that is capable of attaching the heart to virtue, and deterring it from vice. Our hope of reward and fear of puniſhment, our pride, our ſenſe of ſhame, our deſire of exaltation, and our dread of infamy, all are forcibly impreſſed and actuated by this awful expectation of a life to come. Conſider, then, is the gratification of a few ſordid appetites, and that but for a ſhort time, or the indulgence of vicious pleaſures, which muſt quickly die away, a ſufficient recompence for degrading ourſelves in the eyes of God, and diſqualifying our ſouls for an abode among the ſpirits of thoſe juſt men who are made perfect? Surely not. Nothing can poſſibly be a ſufficient atonement for the loſs, or even abaſement of that divine principle, by which we are exalted far above the brutes, and allied to the ſeraphim of heaven. Our Lord, therefore, with great propriety may

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aſk "what ſhall it profit a man, though "he gain the whole world, and loſe his "own ſoul."

MAY we duly attend to theſe exalted truths and ſerious conſiderations, and "work out our ſalvation with fear and "trembling," Let us, inſtead of indulging groveling appetites and low deſires, above all things, "learn to hunger and "thirſt after righteouſneſs," fully perſuaded, "that the hour is coming, in which "all that are in the graves ſhall hear the "voice of the Son of God, and ſhall come "forth, they that have done good unto "the reſurrection of life; and they that "have done evil unto the reſurrection of "damnation."

SER-

# SERMON VIII.

LUKE xviii. 10, 11, 12, 13.

*Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Phariſee, and the other a Publican.*

*The Phariſee ſtood and prayed thus with himſelf, God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjuſt, adulterers, or even as this Publican.*

*I faſt twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I poſſeſs.*

*And the Publican ſtanding afar off, would not lift up ſo much as his eyes unto heaven, but ſmote upon his breaſt, ſaying, God be merciful to me a ſinner.*

NO virtue is more ſtrongly recommended in the holy goſpel than humility. Our bleſſed Lord and Saviour,

in order to enforce his new commandment, "Love one another," and his precepts in general, endeavoured to impreſs mankind with the natural equality of all human beings, and humbled their pride, by explaining the inevitable laws to which all fleſh is ſubject. Before he came to enlighten our minds, "before the day-ſpring "from on high viſited us," the becoming doctrine of humility was but little known. Yet in this uncertain ſtate of things, where a moment gives, and a moment takes away; where no vigilance can guard us from danger, and no prudence can enſure ſucceſs, "where the race is not to the ſwift, "nor the battle to the ſtrong, but where "time and chance happeneth to us all;" what can ſo eminently adorn the human character, as the meek and quiet ſpirit that breathes through the goſpel. Unleſs humility preſide over the heart of man, few are the virtues which he can practiſe, but what will be diſtruſted by the world. He who cannot humble himſelf to the level of humanity, and duly reflect on the conditions

tions by which every worldly bleſſing is enjoyed, will ſeldom attend to the calls of duty, but with a view to raiſe his own importance, to promote his intereſt, or gratify his pride. He will not be one of thoſe modeſt and ſincere chriſtians, who let not their left hand know what their right hand doeth; but ſhould he ever give alms, will be apt to ſound his trumpet before him in the ſtreets. When too, he is engaged in the diſcharge of devotional duties, unleſs this heavenly virtue influence his mind, what will his prayers avail him with that Almighty Being, who regards the "ſighing only of an humble and a con "trite heart?" Add to this, that his ſincerity alſo, will be often called in queſtion, and his piety imputed, not without cauſe, to ſome unworthy motive. The neceſſary adjuncts of true penitence and prayer, we all know, are a due ſenſe of neglected duty and of human weakneſs, together with meekneſs, becoming ſorrow, and, above all things, ſelf-humiliation: but all theſe are very unlikely to prevail in any boſom

but that of the humble man. For theſe reaſons the contrary diſpoſitions, ſuch as vanity, pride and ſelf-exaltation, contaminate religion as well as virtue; but humility ennobles both, and might be conſidered as the great foundation of that ſupreme excellence in morals, which diſtinguiſhes the holy goſpel.

THE Saviour of the world hath taught it us, in the moſt beautiful manner, both by precept and example; and if you wiſh to know its efficacy in the Maſter as well as the diſciple, you will remember that, when he wiſhed to gain the attention of his followers, and win their hearts to his doctrines, theſe were the ſincere and affectionate words which he uſed; "Come," ſaid he, "and learn of me, for I am meek "and lowly of heart." I do not appear before you proud in the acquiſitions of ſcience and wiſe in myſteries; but am come to teach you the common duties of humanity, and inform you, by my actions, that we ſhould do unto others as we would that

that they ſhould do unto us. I do not mean to keep you at a diſtance by the moroſeneſs of philoſophy, or the haughtineſs of learning, but with a meek and lowly ſpirit will receive you as brethren, and lead you to the true knowledge of that all-gracious Being, who is the Father of us all.

SUCH is the importance, and ſuch is the excellence of humility in general. Suffer me now to recommend it more particularly to your notice, by diſcourſing on the beautiful parable in the text. A little meditation will diſcover to us how much the pride of the boaſting Phariſee tarniſhes the pure character of a Chriſtian, and how much the humble penitence of the retired Publican exalts it.

OUR Lord addreſſed this ſhort ſtory, it ſeems, to "certain men who truſted in "themſelves that they were righteous, and "deſpiſed others." In order to expoſe the conduct of ſuch men to the cenſure of the world, he hath introduced a Phariſee open-

ing his mouth, in prayer to the Almighty, with the moſt uncharitable opinion of his fellow-creatures. He thanks God that he is not like other men, whom he condemns as extortioners, unjuſt, and adulterers. Then, inſtead of making any ſupplication for pardon, or interceſſion for mercy, he proceeds to enumerate his good works; which were, that he faſted twice in a week, and gave tithes of all that he poſſeſſed.

The firſt thing that merits reproach in the conduct of this proud, preſumptuous Phariſee, is the mean and illiberal ſpirit which governed his mind. He could claim no merit to himſelf, you perceive, without caſting malignity of cenſure upon the whole world. His chief pretenſions to virtue, even if we believe his own account, were only exemption from injuſtice, extortion and adultery. From the two firſt he might have been deterred by fear of legal puniſhment, or the loſs of reputation in the world; and, as for the laſt, it was only pleading not guilty, to a crime which the

Jewiſh

Jewiſh law puniſhed with the moſt cruel death. Oſtentatious as he was, and willing at all times to dwell on his own deſerts, we hear of no practical duties which he uniformly purſued, no actions of charity, no marks of a benevolent mind, and no inſtances of friendſhip. He ſeems to have ſeparated himſelf from the whole world, and thought that he ſtood alone on the ſummit of human excellence, only becauſe he faſted, regularly, I ſuppoſe, twice in a week, and gave tithes of all that he poſſeſſed. Whereas the firſt of theſe boaſted performances was more a ritual obſervance than any eſſential act of piety, and the other merely a ſubmiſſion to a law of the church which he could not by any means evade. Such were the claims of a man to divine favor, who went up to the holy temple to thank God for his own merits.

But is this imaginary Phariſee the only man who harbours ſuch principles, and purſues ſuch a line of conduct, both in

his ſocial and religious duty? By no means, I fear. To ſhew how theſe haughty diſpoſitions at firſt originate, and how they impede the progreſs of virtue in all ages, let us not confine the ſcene to Judea, nor our contemplations to the ſect of Phariſees, men whom our bleſſed Lord ſo often reproved for pride, hypocriſy and outward ſhew; but, to make this divine leſſon profitable to us, let us caſt our eyes on the preſent world, obſerve the men with whom we live, and mark their manners. We ſhall find many a wretch, like the Phariſee in the text, ground his pretenſions to virtue, not ſo much on his own deſerts, as on the wickedneſs of his neighbours. Many will, with the utmoſt contrition and ſeeming remorſe, level their abuſe at others, whoſe only object is to aggrandize themſelves; and neglect the exerciſe of every relative duty, by perſuading themſelves that the world is undeſerving of it; by drawing ſuch gloomy pictures of human nature, as tend to excite abhorrence of mankind, inſtead of endeavouring to cheriſh that neighbourly love,

love, to which a good man attributes the principal comforts and enjoyments of life.

I CANNOT in this place forbear animadverting, with charity and candor I hope, on the practice of many moral and religious teachers. They would inculcate the great duties of life, and adorn the religion of Chriſt by recommending the love of man; they wiſh to enforce every moral obligation, and ſtrive to win us to the practice of every virtue; but then they will often give us ſuch repreſentations of the world at large, and ſuch views of human affairs, as muſt tend to make us weary, ſick and unhappy under the diſpenſations of providence, rather than cheerful, ſubmiſſive and contented. Beſides, inſtead of promoting the love of virtue and of goodneſs in an intellectual being, it ſerves, in my opinion, moſt effectually to repreſs the exerciſe of it, and extinguiſh every charitable and benevolent principle in man. In order to excite our love and kindneſs, we muſt point out objects that merit it.

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But would you be inclined to repoſe the confidence of friendſhip in any boſom, if you were taught to believe that the world is full of falſhood, treachery and hypocriſy? Is it the way to make us love our neighbour, to tell us that all men are ſelfiſh and ungrateful? Would the heart ever glow with charity, or melt into tears of tenderneſs, if all diſtreſs was believed to be the counterfeit of knavery, or the merited effects of vice and folly? Nature revolts at it. Such modes of inſtruction might ſuit the wild phrenzy of a gloomy enthuſiaſt, or the moping, melancholy ſpirit of ſuperſtition, but it can never promote the duties of ſociety, or be thought of with any ſatisfaction, but by thoſe, who conſcious of no real worth in their own boſom, ſeek refuge from reproof in the enormities of the world, and reſt happy and contented, like the boaſting Phariſee, that they are not extortioners, knaves and adulterers.

But in every concern of life, we are in danger of extremes. We cannot ſearch after

after the Golden Mean with too much diligence and ſolicitude. In every caſe where the duties of ſociety, or the cauſe of religion is concerned, we cannot be too anxious in our enquiry; for the fields of active virtue border on the confines of vice; and no ſooner do we quit the regions of prudence and of wiſdom, than we enter the wilderneſs of folly, and the labyrinths of error. To repreſent men better than they are, is to lay a ſnare for unſuſpecting innocence, and to make the goodneſs and virtue of one part of the world dupes to the vice and diſſimulation of the reſt. It is only ſowing the ſeeds of future mortification and diſappointment, which in weak minds often terminate in miſery, or the continued horrors of a mind ſickened with diſguſt, and at enmity with the whole world. On the other hand, to repreſent men worſe than they really are, is to lay the axe to the root of all virtue. It can do no good, but may do much evil. It tends to deſtroy that confidence between men which is the cement of ſociety, and

without which, every friendly and benevolent action would be traced back to a vicious, rather than a virtuous principle. It affords a pretext for the guilty, for the proud, and the mean wretch, who reſts contented with being negatively good. It increaſes the moroſeneſs of old age, and adds, perhaps, malignity to ill-nature. The bulk of mankind, too, who, for the moſt part will be occaſionally good, would from ſuch a pernicious perſuaſion become indifferent to virtue, deaf to the calls of pity, and uniformly callous and unfeeling. What is worſe than all, the few benevolent characters that adorn human nature, would learn to fear the attacks of vice and diſſimulation from every quarter, and ſuſpicion would ſoon chill that ſocial affection, on which, the chief good and happineſs of this preſent life depend. The Phariſee would never have made his faſting twice in a week, and paying tithes of all that he poſſeſſed a ſubject of proud and arrogant boaſting in the temple of God, unleſs he had firſt entertained a very unfavorable idea, indeed, of

of his fellow-creatures. He never would have found ſufficient cauſe for ſelf-exaltation in his own mind, if he had not thought all mankind ſtigmatized with crimes of the moſt atrocious nature; ſome extortioners, ſome knaves, and ſome adulterers. On the other hand, the meek and humble publican would not have retired and ſmote his boſom in that penitential manner, if he had not entered the temple with a mind overawed by reverence, and a heart deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of its own frailties. He would not have cried, in the fervor of devotion, "God be merciful to me a "ſinner," if he had not entertained a better opinion of the world than the preſumptuous Phariſee, and looked up to characters whoſe goodneſs might remind him of his inferiority, inſtead of dwelling on the vices of the world, and viewing mankind in the worſt light, that he might find a juſtification for his own errors. From this conſideration alone, I truſt, you ſee how the humility, which is exhibited to us in the perſon of the publican, contributes

contributes to exalt the human character, and how the arrogant pride and illiberality of the Phariſee tend to degrade it.

HITHERTO I have conſidered their conduct and the temper of their minds only in a moral point of view; in the following diſcourſe, I ſhall conſider them in a religious light. In the mean time permit me to cloſe the ſubject for the preſent, with ſome few exhortations which it naturally ſuggeſts.

FIRST of all, ſtudy humility as the foundation of every virtue; and remember that our bleſſed Lord, who in his own ſacred perſon united every human and divine excellence, was the meekeſt and lowlieſt of mankind. But by humility, we are not to underſtand that groveling diſpoſition, or ſlaviſh turn of mind, which often characterizes the moſt worthleſs of the human ſpecies, and which is always aſſociated with the meaner vices. Chriſtian humility is ſo far from being an abject ſubmiſſion, that it is

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in reality the higheſt exaltation of the ſoul. It ſhould ſpring from the two great ſources of every mental excellence, our reverence of God and our love of man. It is equally remote from pride and meanneſs. It is a habit of mind ariſing from internal ſentiment rather than from the obſervance of any poſitive precept; a diſpoſition that teaches us to conſider all mankind as brethren, and is never found inconſiſtent with true dignity, except when it is miſconceived by the ignorant, affected by hypocrites, or aſſumed by knaves.

STUDY humility in this ſenſe, therefore, as the true ſource of ſocial love; and ſhould you ever be inclined to think unjuſtly of the world, before you cheriſh the hateful principles of miſanthropy, carefully examine your own boſom, and aſk if no Phariſaical pride lurks there, which fills you with ideas only of your own merits, and makes you deſpiſe others; conſider if no ſenſe of guilt ſeeks for juſtification from the worſt examples; no ſelf-

love,

love, or erroneous opinions, that make you view men with prejudiced eyes; and particularly aſk yourſelf if no diſappointed paſſion, that originated in folly perhaps, ſours your mind, and makes you hate your fellow-creatures without a cauſe. Be unwilling to indulge any uncharitable opinions of human nature, on your own account; for the mind by long brooding over the ſtratagems and miſchiefs, the wickedneſs and vices of the world, will in time loſe ſight of every thing that is amiable, and at laſt find its own purity ſtained, perhaps, by the turpitude of thoſe ideas with which it has been ſo long converſant. Reflect on the characters of thoſe who are always moſt ready to think and ſpeak uncharitably of their neighbours, and you will generally find that they are ſuch as leaſt merit our affection and eſteem. Perhaps they may not be deſtitute of good qualities, but all their virtues wear ſome ungracious and forbidding form. They may not want religion, but then religion in ſome minds, inſtead of regulating the paſſions and improving

proving the heart, ſerves only to bewilder the underſtanding, or to create that auſtere pride, and unſocial temper, which diſpoſe men to look on all around them with the evil eye of the Phariſee in the text. Wicked as the world is by all confeſſed to be, there is ſtill ample room to diſplay every virtue, and to diffuſe the benevolence of a good heart. Many worthy characters are at all times, ſuffering undeſervedly, and ſtruggling with the difficulties of life in poverty and obſcurity; ſome from the vices, and more, perhaps, from the follies of mankind. Such is the preſent ſtate of the world, that virtue and integrity do not always enſure proſperity; nor can innocence of heart ſecure protection from the violence and oppreſſion of the wicked. Theſe may claim, at leaſt, the ſoothing comforts of friendſhip, if not the kind aſſiſtance of opulence and power to ſhelter them from miſery, and bring them forward into notice.

In order to ſettle your principles of action, let me entreat you not to regard the practice of the world, nor follow its cuſtoms or its faſhions any farther than is perfectly conſiſtent with innocence. Act your own part well, though you do it ſingly, and think it honorable to depart from the multitude, rather than do evil. To determine, at all times, and in all exigences, what ſhould be the rule of life, conſult the ſacred word of God, as interpreted by the free, unbiaſſed voice of reaſon. And as the holy apoſtle exhorts us, "whatſoever things are true, whatſoever "things are honeſt, whatſoever things are "juſt, whatſoever things are pure, what-"ſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things "are of good report; if there be any vir-"tue, and if there be any praiſe, let us "think on theſe things." That the good intentions of the heart may neither be fruſtrated, nor abuſed, unite, if poſſible, the utmoſt prudence, with the exerciſe of every good work; but be at all times careful, leſt prudence, which ſhould only be

the guardian of virtue, might diminiſh its worth, and chill its native ardor, by infuſing into the heart the ſpirit of jealouſy, ſuſpicion and diſtruſt. In a word, be in every tranſaction with the world, what our bleſſed Lord adviſed his diſciples; "As wiſe as ſerpents, and as harmleſs as "doves."

# SERMON IX.

LUKE xviii. 10, 11, 12, 13.

*Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Phariſee, and the other a Publican.*

*The Phariſee ſtood and prayed thus with himſelf, God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjuſt, adulterers, or even as this Publican.*

*I faſt twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I poſſeſs.*

*And the Publican ſtanding afar off, would not lift up ſo much as his eyes unto heaven, but ſmote upon his breaſt, ſaying, God be merciful to me a ſinner.*

IN the preceding diſcourſe I conſidered the two characters of the Phariſee and Publican in a moral point of view. It

remains to conſider them in a more important light; as affording us ample inſtruction for the diſcharge of religious duty, and teaching us to entertain a proper ſenſe of ourſelves, as we ſtand in relation to the Almighty Father of the univerſe.

If meekneſs and humbleneſs of mind are virtues which become us as citizens of the world; if they are the handmaids that lead to honor, and are indiſpenſibly neceſſary to the perfection of character in human ſociety, how much more requiſite are they in us, as ſubjects of the ſupreme Governor of the world! Surely we cannot hope to open any profitable intercourſe with Him, who is infinitely perfect, without making our firſt approach with reverence; nor can we ever expect to cultivate his Divine Favor without firſt "ſtanding "in awe," and offering him the willing ſacrifice of a contrite heart.

We are urged to this humble line of duty by various conſiderations, which reaſon

ſon will ſuggeſt, and which the revelation of Chriſt will abundantly confirm. With men whoſe minds are impreſſed with proper ideas of the Divine Nature, a ſenſe of their own ignorance and weakneſs will offer the firſt motives to humility. We are placed in the midſt of a wonderful world, ſurrounded with myſteries. Every exertion of the mind, perhaps, makes us feel the imperfection and inferiority of our nature more ſenſibly. Little, very little is the ſatisfactory knowledge that we can boaſt of, and that too is confined within narrow bounds. The few rays of ſcience that ſpring from the human mind caſt but a faint and ineffectual light. Like a glimmering lamp, fixed in a world of darkneſs, its feeble emanations reach only far enough to direct the bewildered traveller in a very ſmall circle. When we look back on the variegated path of life which we have already trodden, memory and obſervation may furniſh us with an imperfect experience of what has already happened, but cannot ſecure us from danger that is to come. If we attend to the

preſent courſe of our life, we find that we are often harraſſed with fear, or deceived by hope, and feel that in no moment of reflection are we free from perplexity and the moſt anxious doubt. But when we extend our views into futurity, the miſt is impenetrable. Of things that ſeem to concern us intimately, we are mainly ignorant. We know not what dangers now threaten us, what calamities are gathering over our heads, or what temptations are preparing to enthral our virtue. Even in ſpiritual concerns, in thoſe divine matters which ſo highly intereſt us, the holy apoſtle tells us, we are permitted "to ſee only as "through a glaſs darkly." Juſtly therefore hath this been termed "the land of "ſhadows" and the vale of darkneſs; for even of ourſelves are we moſt ignorant. The glorious mark of diſtinction between us and the mere animals we know little of. We talk of the mind without any real knowledge concerning it, beyond the conſciouſneſs of its exiſtence. Of its eſſence we are entirely ignorant. It has power indeed

indeed to perceive its own ideas and feel its own affections; but cannot trace out their origin, or analize their nature with any degree of accuracy or preciſion.

THOUGH our knowledge is ſo limited, yet our power ſeems to be ſtill more ſo. We might indeed diſtreſs one another for a few ſhort years, and wantonly harraſs the poor creatures of the earth. Theſe being ſtill more helpleſs than ourſelves, are made ſubſervient to our appetites and pleaſures. But not an atom of all the matter which crouds the univerſe can we call into being, and not an atom, ſtrictly ſpeaking, are we able to deſtroy. We might ſee the ſtorm gather, but cannot eſcape its fury, and ſometimes view the uplifted arm, without being able to avoid the blow.

THESE and many other conſiderations, while they ſhew our own folly and weakneſs, diſcover to us the infinite wiſdom and power of the great Creator. And,

" why

" why are theſe things ſo?" The ſacred volume anſwers the queſtion; " that no " fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence; that " we might not be high-minded one to- " wards another, but do juſtly, love mercy, " and walk humbly with our God."

WHAT has been ſaid ſuggeſts another powerful motive to humility. The natural conſequence of our ignorance and want of power, is diſtreſs of various kinds. Evils come upon us, which we have neither wiſdom to foreſee, nor power to remove. To-day, the ſudden loſs of fortune threatens us with poverty; to-morrow, the death of one, whoſe friendſhip and affection formed, perhaps, the greateſt part of our felicity, overwhelms us with anguiſh. Not ſufficiently afflicted by the awful viſitations of Heaven, we bring additional evils on ourſelves. Sometimes ambition lays the foundation of bitter diſappointment, guilt and miſery; and ſometimes peace is frightened from our boſoms by fierce and vindictive paſſions; by the violence of enmity, or

the

the rancour of revenge. Now too a ruffian ſtabs, or plunders in the dark; and at all times there are enemies ready to ſubvert, or undermine our happineſs.

Such is the melancholy ſtate of human nature. Why this ſhould originally form a law in the diſpenſation of providence, it is not for us to enquire. The great and becoming doctrine of man is ſubmiſſion; not complaint, or preſumptuous murmuring that he is no better and no happier; but contentment and thankfulneſs that he is, what he is. That "we are born to trou-"ble as the ſparks fly upwards," is the language of ſcripture. Inſtead, therefore, of vainly enquiring why it is ſo, it behoves us to conſider what purpoſes are wiſely anſwered by this ordination of providence, and what lines of moral and religious duty are marked out by it. This will lead me to an application of the matter before us. When the world frowns upon us; when our beſt intentions are fruſtrated, and our moſt vigorous exertions fail of producing the wiſhed-

wiſhed-for effect; when hope has often cheated us with fallacious proſpects, and the mind, worn out with diſappointments, ſinks under the preſſure of calamity; where can we fly for ſuccour, but to the mercy and protection of God? "In the multi-"tude of ſorrows, his comforts only are "ſufficient to refreſh the ſoul." If we ſeek any other refuge from diſtreſs, we ſhall in all probability lay the foundation of freſh diſappointment. Not to mention the fluctuating ſtate of human affairs, the world is deluſive in its proſpects, partial and capricious in its rewards. To the proſperous it offers no ſettled point of reſt, and to the unfortunate it affords no aſylum in which they might learn to forget their woes. On the other hand, religion opens a ſanctuary to ALL; but chiefly to the wretched. Contrary to the practice of the world, ſhe confers her peculiar bleſſings on thoſe who moſtly need them; "the poor in ſpirit; "them that mourn, and them that are "perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake." Under every affliction of providence, they may look

look forward, with the ſteady eye of faith, to the awful day of retribution, which will ſoon arrive; and if they continue in well doing, may be aſſured, that "in due time "they ſhall reap, if they faint not." This was the only comfort that cheared the beſt of men, under the heavieſt of all worldly misfortunes; "they were troubled," we are told, "on every ſide, yet not diſtreſſed; "they were perplexed, but not in deſpair; "perſecuted, but not forſaken; caſt down, "but not deſtroyed."

In like manner every good man, laboring with the accumulated ills of life, will find a never-failing comfort and ſupport in religious hope. His worldly affairs may change, enemies may perſecute him, and friends may prove falſe; but his chief happineſs is founded on faith and confidence in heaven; a rock about which the ſtorms of fortune may beat, but cannot prevail. Inſtead, therefore, of idly murmuring againſt the miſeries and diſappointments of life, we might employ our minds to ſome

advantage

advantage in tracing out that good which naturally flows from them, and thoſe duties with which they are inſeparably united.

THUS, we might perceive, that we are taught the virtues of humanity in the moſt forcible manner, by the misfortunes of others. Nor is this the only ſalutary purpoſe gained. The general calamities of life, added to the uncertainty and imperfection of its enjoyments, teach us more than any thing elſe, to place our chief dependance on God; and this is the great duty of religion. The longer we live, the more clearly do we diſcover the vanity of the world, and the leſs eager are we of its pleaſures and amuſements. By the many difficulties we meet with in the proſecution of our deſires, and the frequent diſappointments we experience in their gratification, we are gradually taught to repoſe on the comforts of religion for true happineſs, and to quiet the tumults of the boſom with thoſe calm joys which ſpring from a well-

grounded

grounded piety. As we approach the cloſe of life, the better are we formed, by nature, for the diſcharge of devotional duties, and the opening of thoſe bright proſpects which revelation has diſcloſed to us. Every thing concurs to make us look up to the Everlaſting Father, as the ſource of all good, and to conſult his eternal will as the only ſure rule of life. By experience only we learn the vanity and vexation of the world, and as our attachments to its buſineſs and pleaſures diminiſh, it was wiſely ordered in a ſtate of trial, that our dependence on God ſhould increaſe.

THUS have I endeavoured to exhibit to you the ignorance, the want of power, and the abſolute dependence of man, as he ſtands in the univerſal chain of being, connected with his Maker. Can I offer you more commanding motives to humility? Whether you reflect on the condition of human nature, or the attributes of God, you will be taught this great and fundamental virtue in the moſt forcible manner.

manner. His wiſdom and his mercy fill our hearts with love and admiration; his juſtice and his power command our reverence and awe; while the ſecret diſpenſations of his providence teach us to place our whole reliance on him, as the ſupreme Governor of the world, "for every good and perfect gift." The whole ſyſtem of nature, our own anxious and uncertain ſtate, the plan of inviſible power, as far as we can trace its operations, all conſpire to create in our minds thoſe meek and humble diſpoſitions, which our bleſſed Lord ſo conſtantly recommended.

WHILE conſiderations ſo extenſive and important ſhew us that theſe ſober affections are at once neceſſary to our duty and our happineſs; while religion ſows the ſeeds of ſuch gentle virtues in our heart; what ſhould be their genuine fruit? What, but that unaſſuming ſpirit of charity to one another which chriſtianity every where inculcates, and the conſtant practice of meek and humble piety towards God? A mind

mind thus formed to reverence and humility, would carefully examine into all its frailties, and inſtead of boaſting of its own deſerts, would ſeek " to work out its own " ſalvation with fear and trembling." How much the Phariſee in the text was a ſtranger to this great duty of ſelf-humiliation, is ſufficiently obvious. He ſeems to have thought himſelf quite ſecure of the divine favor; and ſuch was his inſenſibility to all his errors; ſo wholly unprepared was his mind for true prayer; that his only buſineſs in the holy temple was to enumerate two unprofitable duties (duties which do not deſerve the name of piety) and to thank God for his ſuperiority over " other men." Proud and preſumptuous mortal! He knew little of that brotherly love which ties the bands of ſocial union; and ſtill leſs of that reverential awe which forms a neceſſary part of devotion to God. He forgot that " in his preſence no man " living ſhall be juſtified; that he viſit- " eth the proud and giveth grace to the " humble; and that his ſacrifice is a

" broken ſpirit, an humble and a contrite
" heart."

OUR bleſſed Lord has wonderfully adapted this little ſtory to our improvement, as it tends to correct ſome of thoſe common evils, which he knew would at all times be moſt likely to prevail; pride, blindneſs to our own imperfections, want of charity to man, and ignorance of our duty towards God naturally ariſing from them. This laſt indeed is the grand, ultimate evil which will moſtly endanger our happineſs. We ſhould at all times be careful, therefore, either to remove, or avoid it, by tracing out its origin and viewing its effects. It flows from different ſources; ſometimes from falſe imaginations or diſordered paſſions; ſometimes from enthuſiaſm and ſuperſtitious fears; ſometimes from guilt, and often from indolence.

CAST your eyes upon ſociety, and you may obſerve many who dignify themſelves with the name of Chriſtians, inattentive to

to the practical duties of life, and like the Phariſee in the text, juſtified from the deluſions of their own minds, or the impoſitions of others. See them fly from the arduous taſks of virtue, and the rational exerciſe of piety, to the vain ſubterfuges of folly or of guilt. Inſtead of actions that ſpring from true benevolence and friendſhip to man, hear them talk of imaginary communications in language that is utterly unintelligible, or repeat waking dreams about ſpiritual experiences. Were we to extend obſervation and conſider other claſſes of men, "who truſt in themſelves that "they are righteous, and who ſometimes, "I fear, deſpiſe others;" we ſhould find too many that are always ready to diſparage the efficacy of thoſe duties which they have neglected to practiſe, and either juſtifying themſelves, like the Phariſee in the text, from the examples of the wicked, or ſeeking comfort in the deluſions of a mind, firſt at variance with itſelf, and by degrees ſeeking repoſe, perhaps, in principles framed to its own depravity.

But though falſe and artificial notions of duty are much to be regretted in others, and guarded againſt in ourſelves; yet the want of conſtancy and perſeverance in the plain, acknowledged path of chriſtian duty, is ſtill more ſo. Attend to the courſe of men's lives in common, whatever be their religious tenets, and you will find it filled up with alternate ſucceſſions of vice and virtue, piety and profaneneſs; repenting to-day, and tranſgreſſing to-morrow; at one time practiſing the mean and pitiful arts of vanity and ſelf-love, at another time occupied in the exerciſe of charity, and the kind offices of friendſhip; in the evening rioting in ſinful and intemperate pleaſures, and in the morning, ſtrictly engaged in devotional duty. Among the general evils of life, I know not if any is to be more lamented than this inconſiſtency of the human character. It is this, as much as any thing, that renders our ſteps unſure in the world; it is this that often converts friendſhip into diſguſt, and bids every

every one "who thinks he ſtands, take "heed leſt he fall."

MANY, too many are there at all times floating looſely on the wide current of life, ready to receive any direction that paſſion or the gale of popular humor may give them. Their minds unfixed by any principles, and therefore always in ſuſpenſe, eaſily yield to the ſolicitations of pleaſure, or the aſſails of vice, whenever appetite or paſſion craves indulgence. The calls of duty are no longer heard than when temption is removed, and the wandering heart at reſt. Hence it is that we perceive ſuch quick tranſitions from good to evil; from temperance to debauchery; from religion to impiety. This leads me laſtly to explain the conduct of the publican, and recommend it to your practice.

Do not ſuppoſe that his ſhort and penitential prayer ſprung from one of thoſe occaſinal fits of piety, and that immediately after he relapſed into all the vices

of a looſe and diſorderly life; that would be gaining juſtification on terms by much too eaſy, even under the merciful diſpenſation of the holy goſpel. For there our Lord has expreſsly told us, that it is not "every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, "Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of "heaven; but he that doeth the will of "my Father which is in heaven." We muſt not underſtand, therefore, that his meekneſs and prayer were the momentary effects of guilt or fear; but that they ſprung from habitual humility, and the ſteady ſpirit of true devotion. He knew that when we have done our utmoſt, in the ſight of God, "we are but unprofit-"able ſervants;" and therefore with a mind overawed by the perfections of the divine nature, and fully ſenſible of his own frailties, he was at all times ready to ſmite upon his boſom, and cry for mercy. He knew that whatever his merits might have been, it was at once preſumptuous and unneceſſary to recount them, for his "heavenly Father ſaw him in ſecret, and

"would

"would reward him openly." Fully ſenſible that "pride was not made for man," he cultivated the meekeſt and humbleſt diſpoſitions, and ſought the favor of God by penitence and prayer. Let not the wretch therefore who has lived in the habitual indulgence of vicious paſſions, hope for that juſtification which the pious publican found, by attending to the great duties of religion for the preſent hour; ſince this might be the ſudden effect of guilt and fear, or (what is too often the caſe) nothing but an indolent, unmeaning practice, under the form of ſanctity; but let him ſet about the great work of repentance with the firmeſt reſolution. Before he ſuffers himſelf to reſt in ſecurity, or hope for juſtification, let his devotion be calm and ſteady; not an occaſional paſſion, but a conſtant habit of the ſoul; not a refuge from the terrors of ſuperſtition, or the rebukings of a wounded conſcience, but the rational and ſublime enjoyment of a well-regulated mind, in its intercourſe with heaven. The painful calls of duty ſhould

by no means be the only motives to devotion. The ſoul ſhould ſo mingle love with reverence, ſo unite the idea of divine mercy with that of divine juſtice, that it might feel the moſt pleaſurable ſatisfaction, and be diſpoſed to rejoice, but conſiſtent with the apoſtle's precept, to "rejoice with trembling." Be careful, therefore, leſt you miſtake the looſe and involuntary emotions of piety, for thoſe ſettled diſpoſitions of the mind, and thoſe conſtant habits of goodneſs, which our bleſſed religion ſo uniformly teaches and requires. There is a wide difference between the imperfect devotion of one whoſe courſe of duty is daily interrupted by unruly paſſions, though he might not be deficient in the external diſcharge of it, and the man whoſe affections do not jar with his principles, and who, therefore, renders unto God a ſervice that is chearful, uniform and willing. The one reſembles the lightning flaſhing ſuddenly from the dark cloud; the other is like the unremitting ſunſhine of a clear ſummer's-day.

LET us endeavour to keep our duty in this conſtant tenor, both in our commerce with the world and our ſervices to God. To acquire conſiſtency of character in every concern of life, let us fix the attention of our minds on the great moral Governor of the univerſe. His omnipreſence, his juſtice, the uncertainty of our ſtate and his promiſes of future judgment, are all powerful motives to conſtancy in the diſcharge of duty. To guard ourſelves againſt the many impoſitions of pride, vanity and ſelf-love, let us imitate the example of the meek and penitential publican. Be aſſured no one is ſo perfect, as not to need repentance; no one is ſo free from error but that he might ſmite upon his boſom, and cry, "God be merciful to me a "ſinner."

# SERMON X.

MAT. XXVI. 22.

*Lord, is it I?*

THE occaſion which gave riſe to this queſtion was awful and affecting. The hour was now at hand, when the Saviour of the world was to exert the laſt effort of patient fortitude, and endure the agonies of crucifixion. Previous to this tremendous ſcene of ſuffering and of death, he gave his diſciples all the conſolation in his power, mingled with wholeſome admonition and affectionate advice. In the fervency of prayer he implored his heavenly Father's protection for them. In a man-

a manner more perſonal and endearing than at any former period, he gave them his laſt inſtructions. He warned them of the dangers they had to encounter, and the difficulties they had to ſurmount. They were ſent, he told them, as lambs among wolves; they were to be perſecuted by the world, hated, and, at length, deſtroyed. But while he foretold theſe their ſufferings and calamities, that they might be enabled to endure them, he promiſes them comfort and ſupport from heaven; nor did they want motives that ſprung from the moſt endearing friendſhip, to render their conduct ſteady, and their miniſtry effectual.

On the eve of his departure from the world, he had appointed to eat the paſſover with his beloved diſciples. He brake bread with them and bleſſed it for the laſt time, and was to drink of the fruit of the vine no more, until he drank it new with them in his Father's kingdom. What their ſentiments of love and adoration muſt have been on this ſolemn occaſion, and how they

they were blended with the ſoft emotions of ſorrow, we might in ſome meaſure conceive, but can by no means expreſs. While he inſtituted this divine repaſt as a holy ſacrament that might perpetuate, with grateful piety, the remembrance of his death and ſufferings, his merits and his love; while they hung, with ſtedfaſt attention and adoring love, on the lips of their dying Saviour, he interrupted this heavenly intercourſe by charging one of them with an act of the moſt flagrant treachery and guilt. "Verily I ſay unto "you, that one of you ſhall betray me," was the dreadful accuſation.

THEIR behaviour on this occaſion appears ſomewhat ſingular. "They were "exceeding ſorrowful," as St. Matthew relates, "and began every one of them to "ſay, Lord, is it I?" Conſcious as they all were of their innocence, (if we except the traitor Judas) and ſtedfaſt as they all were in their attachment, they neither treated the charge with indignation, nor conſidered

conſidered the crime which it exhibited as an impoſſibility. They had, indeed, ever regarded the words of their Saviour as ſacred and inviolable truth; and as he had deeply impreſſed them with a ſenſe of human frailty, they received this dreadful intelligence with an implicit belief. Sorrow and confuſion were the effects it produced on their minds. Whatever confidence they had in their own ſtrength, and with what juſtice ſoever that confidence might have been founded, there were no vain proteſtations of unſhaken integrity, and no boaſt of invincible virtue; but every one, while he diſtruſted the teſtimony of his own heart, was deſirous of exculpating himſelf by aſking, with trembling anxiety, "Lord, is it I?"

It is to the conduct of our bleſſed Lord's diſciples in this diſtreſſing ſituation, that I wiſh to direct your attention. It may ſuggeſt to us a train of reflections no leſs intereſting than profitable. We may learn from it the duty of diſtruſting our own ſtrength,

ſtrength, in certain caſes, at leaſt, and the neceſſity of guarding againſt all temptation. From a conviction of the infirmities of man, we may reflect on the vice and folly of the world with the juſt, but charitable ſpirit of the goſpel, ſee the propriety of ſelf-examination, and diſcipline our own hearts.

It is natural to aſſociate with innocence, an open temper and a generous boldneſs. Suſpicion, with regard to others, is ſometimes the growth of a depraved heart, but oftener, perhaps, a groveling habit of mind ariſing from a baſe intercourſe with the world. Diffidence and diſtruſt of ourſelves are ſeldom felt, while we poſſeſs the conſciouſneſs of good diſpoſitions, and before our virtue has ſuffered from ignorance, or the violence of unexpected temptations. But we cannot conſider at too early a period that the preſent life is a continual warfare. Difficulties and dangers ſurround us on every ſide, and they will be multiplied to him that expects them not. The

enemy,

enemy, indeed, is not always diſcoverable; we are ſometimes wounded, before we ſee the ſhaft, and in the flowery paths which we tread with moſt delight, lurks the ſerpent that will ſting us. The beſt ſecurity, therefore, for innocence, is always to ſuppoſe ourſelves in danger. This will teach us not the cold, and often hypocritical caution of the world, but the prudent circumſpection of chriſtians, that we may avoid thoſe temptations which lie before us, and arm ourſelves againſt thoſe evils which "muſt come." Could we read the human heart, could we recal paſt events, and minutely examine the many complicated and almoſt imperceptible motives of action, we ſhould find that more have been deluded by thoughtleſs indiſcretion and too great confidence in their own goodneſs, than by any rooted depravity or natural inclination to evil. Obſerve the youth, who, in his firſt career, catches at every pleaſure within his reach, and indulges himſelf in every gratification that ariſes from ſentiment and paſſion, or that ſprings immediately

immediately from the ſenſes. He is conſcious of no crime. He truſts in the rectitude of his intentions and the goodneſs of his heart, to ſecure him againſt the taint of corruption; but, alas! he knows not the dangers that lie in his way, nor marks the boundaries where vice and pleaſure, guilt and innocence begin to blend. Here is the place where we all ought to make a reſolute ſtand, and guard ourſelves againſt the firſt encroachments of evil. For ſo eaſily does ſin beſet us, that even our beſt diſpoſitions might lead us into error, if not regulated by ſteady principles, and influenced by the mild authority of chriſtian duties. Charity and pity, love and friendſhip, all have their exceſſes. From an amiable, but inconſiderate ardor, we are often entangled with the obligations of oppoſite duties, and the heart, though at firſt actuated by the generous impulſe of virtue, is at leaſt diſordered, if not corrupted, by irregular and contending paſſions.

If we conſider thoſe propenſities which, however innocent, when indulged to a certain degree, have always a tendency to evil, we ſhall find a wider door open for the admiſſion of every depravity. The love of pleaſure and the indulgence of pride, taken in the moſt extenſive ſenſe, we may rank, perhaps, among the firſt corrupters of our innocence. Harmleſs amuſement and lawful gratification are the invitations which the former holds out; perſonal dignity and independent ſpirit tempt us to enliſt under the banners of the latter. To the dangerous dominion of theſe ruling paſſions how many may attribute their miſery and guilt! If we drink ſparingly at the fountains of pleaſure, we generally return with increaſing appetite; if we take larger draughts we are almoſt ſure of being corrupted. And though the inability of quenching our thirſt might ſometimes wound the mind with painful reflection, yet happy is he who wants the power of gratifying every wiſh that riſes in his heart. Our diſappointments indeed

might ſometimes be regarded as bleſſings. Such is the frailty and imperfection of human nature, particularly if the heart be capable of warm affections, that we cannot indulge deſires in themſelves amiable, perhaps, with perfect ſecurity. We know not with what dangerous, if not guilty paſſions, they may combine in their progreſs, and by what ſecret and irreſiſtible force they may undermine the foundations of virtue. So needful at all times is the precept of our bleſſed Lord, "Watch and "pray, leſt ye enter into temptation."

If the beſt of men, when one only was accuſed of treachery and ingratitude, could aſk, with deep humiliation, "Lord, is it "I?" If they who were choſen from the world to preach the goſpel of Chriſt, and whoſe virtues entitled them to ſuch exalted diſtinction, as to be called by their divine Maſter "the ſalt of the earth;" if theſe men could admit, at leaſt, the *poſſibility* of guilt, and that too in an atrocious degree, when no dangerous paſſion alarmed

their ſouls, but when their hearts were filled with the grateful emotions of pious love and reverence; what might not we juſtly apprehend on occaſions far leſs favorable to innocence and virtue? when, for inſtance, we indulge the riſing impulſe of anger, yield to the ſolicitation of looſe and voluptuous deſires, though the power of gratifying them might be mercifully withheld, or ſhare in the banquets of diſſipation? We cannot too often "take "heed unto ourſelves, nor keep our ſouls "with ſufficient diligence." The moſt powerful ſeductions are often adminiſtered under the form of pleaſure, and latent miſchiefs ſpring up around us, before we are fully ſenſible that we have ſtrayed from the paths of duty. When once the taint of corruption alſo has faſtened on us, the misfortune of it is, we cannot tell with what a fatal progreſs it will ſpread, nor how ſoon ſin will eſtabliſh her dominion over us. Theſe reflections, which reaſon will acknowledge to be juſt, and experience knows to be true, the hiſtory of man, as faithfully

faithfully recorded in the holy volume, will abundantly confirm.

DAVID, when he viewed the wife of Uriah with fond, but criminal admiration, little thought himſelf capable of the vile, premeditated murder of her huſband. The cruel Haman might not have ſuppoſed that his pride, when firſt wounded by the trifling diſrepect of Mordecai, the Jew, would have led him to conceive the horrid deſign of deſtroying, not only him, but all his race, wherever diſperſed throughout his ſovereign's dominions. Nor is it eaſy to imagine that Ahithophel knew the danger and the guilt that always attended his vain and intolerant ſpirit, when becauſe his counſel was rejected, the wretch went and hanged himſelf. Yet ſuch are the dreadful conſequences of paſſions that at firſt may flatter human nature perhaps, but which in their progreſs, gradually diſſolve the ties of duty, and at length overwhelm us with guilt and miſery.

If we examine the New Teſtament, there are examples equally ſtriking. We find Judas, by ſome unaccountable depravity, betraying his heavenly Maſter into the hands of his enemies for thirty pieces of ſilver; and that too with a kiſs. Probably the gratification of ſome craving appetite, that had overpowered all ſenſe of ſhame as well as virtue, tempted him to graſp at the "price of iniquity," and to commit a crime at which his nature, at ſome paſt period of life, perhaps, would have ſhuddered with horror. The ſhameful denial of Peter, after all his paſſionate and earneſt vows, is too well known to be particularly dwelt on; but to mention one inſtance more. Do you think that Herodias, when ſhe firſt entertained the hope of becoming Herod's wife, was ſenſible of the dreadful guilt which lurked in her heart, and which the indulgence of her lawleſs deſires ſoon gave birth to? But yet we ſee ſuch at length was the wildneſs of her rage, and ſuch was the fury of her revenge againſt the venerable Baptiſt, only becauſe he had with manly

manly boldneſs oppoſed her criminal paſſion, that ſhe rather longed for his blood than wealth and power, even when ſhe might have been gratified to the half of Herod's kingdom. Revenge of the moſt horrid nature had by degrees taken full poſſeſſion of her ſoul, and ſhe whom we find no where accuſed of guilt before, could now feaſt her eyes with murder; for ſhe required that the head of John Baptiſt ſhould be brought and given her in a charger. His death alone was not ſufficient; ſhe could feel a horrid ſatisfaction in viewing the pale and bleeding head of her enemy. Of ſuch depravity is the human ſoul capable! So prone indeed are we to evil, and ſo ſubject to temptation, that almoſt every deſire of the heart might ultimately corrupt our innocence, and enthral our virtue. The diſcipline of the paſſions, therefore, is one of the moſt important duties of life; but in order to render this diſcipline effectual, we muſt "put on the whole "armour of God," and be ever ready to combat with the enemy. There is no time

to ſleep or ſlumber away in fancied ſecurity. Not only the citadel, but the outworks of virtue muſt be guarded with unwearied diligence, if we hope to repel the invaders of our peace, and ſhew ourſelves worthy of "the Captain of our ſalvation."

COULD we, indeed, propoſe to ourſelves certain rules of action, ſufficiently comprehenſive for the various ſituations of life; could we rely on ourſelves for the due performance of every ſocial and religious duty, from the diſintereſted love of our neighbour and the pure worſhip of God; could we ſay with confidence and truth, when any paſſion riſes in the heart, thus far ſhall thy dominion extend and no farther; then might we allow ourſelves to walk with leſs circumſpection, and purſue, with heedleſs joy, the gratification of our wiſhes. But, not to mention the more ſecret, though no leſs dangerous deluſions of the mind, how few are there that embark on pleaſure's ſmiling ſtream, can determine where they will ſtop? Down the

the enchanting tide we ſail with gay delight and thoughtleſs negligence; we are charmed with the preſent enjoyment, and fancy anticipates new gratifications; the ſoul ſlumbers in viſionary bliſs, and too often before ſhe rouſes from her lethargy, our fragile bark is left expoſed upon the ſand, agitated by the violence of the waves, or daſhed againſt the hidden rocks and ſwallowed up in the ocean!

CONSIDER the wretch who now with deep contrition, perhaps, mourns the fatal conſequences of his folly or his guilt; enquire into the cauſe of his miſconduct, and you will find that vice and diſorder, ſin and corruption imperceptibly took poſſeſſion of his heart. Nay, examine the criminal who forfeits his life to the violated laws of ſociety, and he will tell you, there *was* a time, when his heart was at leaſt free from any atrocious ſin, and when he would have ſhrunk with horror from the crimes which he has been led to perpetrate. Perhaps ſome may truly add, that wicked companions

nions had taken advantage of their unguarded minds, and by their ſcoffs and ſneers ſeduced them from the ſober paths of duty; that the obligations of virtue and religion were inſenſibly loſt, and the mind, at length, influenced by no motive or principle but what ſprung from ſenſual indulgence and preſent gratification.

The inſatiable thirſt of pleaſure, and a proud ſpirit of independence, are indeed the moſt abundant ſources of miſery and guilt. Theſe, whether preſented to the mind under the pleaſing form of lawful enjoyment, or exemption from the arduous duties, and the conſtant diſcipline of a chriſtian, too often, in their progreſs, unhinge our minds, and deſtroy the efficacy of every virtue. God forbid, that the love of pleaſure, or the indulgence of pride, ſhould produce in any of us the guilt which the former brought on David, or the infamy and ruin with which the latter overwhelmed Haman. Yet ſuch alarming examples in men, not wholly abandoned, might teach us to examine

mine our own hearts with deep humiliation, when we feel the firſt incitements to evil, and aſk ourſelves, as though we were in the preſence of our heavenly Judge, "Lord, is it I?" The world in general, we may obſerve, conſiſts of mixed characters; of men that are neither ſuperlatively good, nor ſuperlatively bad; that want not good diſpoſitions, though blended with an unavoidable portion of human frailty; that are ever ready to avow their deteſtation of vice, though not always ſtudious to avoid it; and that always profeſs their reverence of virtue, though they have not ſufficient fortitude invariably to practiſe it. Theſe ſeem to be the proper and more immediate objects of moral and religious diſcipline; and to them the precepts of chriſtianity more particularly apply. If, therefore, to the bulk of mankind we confine our obſervations, at preſent, we ſhall ſtill be able to trace the lamentable effects of pleaſure and of pride in men who are not entirely negligent of their duty; but who uphold ſome degree of character and reputation

reputation in the world. Waſte of time and waſte of fortune, looſeneſs of principle and habits of idleneſs are, perhaps, the invariable effects of the former; vanity and ſelf-love, frequent mortification, enmity and domeſtic tyranny, are ſure to wait upon the latter.

THE knowledge of this weakneſs and corruption of our nature ſhould teach, or at leaſt enforce, ſome of the moſt amiable, though too often neglected parts of chriſtian duty. In contemplating the misfortunes and judging of the failings of our fellow-creatures, we ſhould learn from it to regulate our conduct by the charity, candour and forbearance of the holy goſpel. Much of the vice and diſorder that reigns among us might be attributed to motives that ought to excite our pity; to a ſtate of ignorant and wretched poverty; to a total want or neglect of virtuous education; and the ſeducing influence of bad example continually preſented to the mind. Some alſo are expoſed to extraordinary trials

of

of fortitude and conſtancy. The hearts of all are not equally warmed with the love of virtue, nor in equal danger of being miſled by the ardor of the paſſions. Temptations appear to different characters in different ſhapes; ſome are more expoſed to the aſſaults of evil than others, and ſome who were well fortified in that part where they moſt expected an enemy, might have been unexpectedly attacked where they were moſt vulnerable. In fighting the good, but arduous fight of chriſtian faith, few ought to conſider themſelves as conquerors; many muſt be wounded, and ſome muſt fall.

Vice, it is true, ſhould always diſguſt us, and miſery, when devoid of innocence, will be regarded without reſpect, if not without pity. Yet in our intercourſe with the world, few are there whoſe errors will not admit of ſome extenuation; and if there are many wretched, in conſequence of their guilt, let it be remembered that there are many proſperous who have little pretenſion

pretenſion to virtue. "Judge not that ye "be not judged," is a rule of conduct that could never have come from the mouth of a human teacher, and is truly worthy of the Saviour of the world. Few are there who can lay claim to ſuch ſuperior excellence as might authorize them to paſs an unqualified ſentence on others, and none ſhould be forward to ſhew the rigor of their juſtice, before they have ſo thoroughly purified their own hearts, as to be aſſured that they are not eſtabliſhing, in the ſight of God and Man, an example that might hereafter operate againſt themſelves. We ſhould, indeed, "be inſtant in ſeaſon, and "out of ſeaſon," in checking the progreſs of vice and promoting the cauſe of virtue. We ſhould exhort with all meekneſs and long-ſuffering; when ſeverity would be ineffectual and condemnation vain, we might, with wholeſome reproof, or patient gentleneſs, often heal the wounds of the mind, and ſtop the further progreſs of corruption, by imitating the example of him who would "not break a bruiſed "reed."

"reed." But there is always a mixture of depravity in ſpreading with apparent ſatisfaction the crimes and vices of the world. Let the abhorrence of ſin be as deeply fixed in our own boſoms as poſſible, and let the fear of offending the Almighty Father of the univerſe be ever uppermoſt in our hearts; but let us be always careful that we derive not our virtues or our merits from the prevalent guilt of others. When we ſee the votary of pleaſure become the victim of ſin, and he who has never "governed his ſpirit," hurried on to the commiſſion of crimes of the blackeſt dye; inſtead of indulging a vain ſpirit of exultation, and "thanking God that we are "not like other men," we ſhould do much better to imitate the conduct of our Saviour's diſciples, and aſk, with deep concern, "Lord, is it I?" Have I ſo diſciplined my heart that I am in no danger of ſuch evils? Am I ſo fortified, by thy holy word and counſel, that I may defy temptation, and repoſe in ſafety without fearing the ſin that doth ſo eaſily beſet us,

"in

" in the midſt of a guilty and ſeducing " world?" Such reflections might enable us to derive good from evil, and teach us a more intimate knowledge of ourſelves. Before we indulge ourſelves in open condemnation and violent reproach, let us conſider whether we are not more indebted for the ſmall portion of goodneſs we may claim, to the guardian care of providence and the kindneſs of others, than to any acquired ſtrength or exertion of our own. Frequently commune with your own hearts on this important ſubject, and guard againſt the deluſions of vanity and ſelf-love. Examine if your virtue be an active principle, capable of combating the ills, and enduring, with patient fortitude, the afflictions of life; or whether it be a ſomething dormant in your boſoms, that has never yet been rouſed by any alarming danger, and of which therefore you neither know the value or the power. Do not think yourſelves worthy of being called the diſciples and followers of Chriſt, till the victory over temptation has been often decided,

and

and till your virtues have at leaſt been proved, if not perfected like his, by ſuffering and calamity. If you contentedly rank yourſelves among thoſe thoughtleſs mortals who are ſatisfied with good diſpoſitions only, and take no care to guard them againſt the deceitfulneſs and perverſion of ſin; if you have no ſteady views in your conduct, no principles of action derived from higher authority than this world's good, at once to regulate and ſanctify the heart, you will remember, that all is at the mercy of accident; and on nothing can you rely for ſafety, but the goodneſs of divine providence, in ſtill guarding you againſt temptation and ſhielding you from all evil. Whatever diſorder you ſee in the world ariſing from violence and ungoverned paſſions, you may truly ſuppoſe yourſelves capable of, and aſk with fear and anxiety, "Lord, is it I?" unleſs you are prepared by habits of chriſtian duty previouſly formed, to repel the attacks of vice, and to ſuffer chearfully in the cauſe of virtue. If we embark on a wide and troubled ocean

without this wiſdom for our guide, and this fortitude for our defence, it is in vain to hope for ſafety; we are ſure of being driven from our courſe, bewildered and diſtreſſed, if not entirely loſt.

SUCH being the difficulty and danger of a chriſtian's warfare, let us learn to compaſſionate the diſtreſſes of our fellow-creatures, from whatever cauſe they might ariſe, and inſtead of indulging any uncharitable cenſure, or Phariſaical pride, "let "every man, who thinks he ſtandeth, take "heed," with the meekneſs and humility of our Lord's diſciples, "leſt he fall."

SER-

# SERMON XI.

ACTS iv. 32.

*And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one ſoul.*

THE words of the text expreſs, with peculiar force, the perfect unanimity that ſubſiſted between the primitive profeſſors of chriſtianity. They are no leſs a proof of their zeal and affection for each other. The ſtrong and ſignificant expreſſion of St. Luke, that "they were "of one heart and one ſoul," gives us the livelieſt idea of friendſhip, harmony and love. Indeed, the perilous ſituation in

which the apoſtles were left, required, to render their miniſtry effectual, the moſt vigorous perſeverance, the firmeſt attachment to the bleſſed truths which their heavenly Maſter had taught them, and above all, the utmoſt unanimity among themſelves.

DISSENTION might have been fatal, and luke-warm piety would have done nothing. To whatever ſubject, indeed, we direct our attention; whether we conſider the operations of armies, or the exertions of the legiſlative body, nothing great can be atchieved, and nothing valuable can be obtained, but by united endeavours and general concurrence. Nor is this ſpirit of unanimity leſs neceſſary to the peace and comfort of domeſtic life. Every one knows, how much his happineſs and perhaps his welfare would be promoted, were all about him diſpoſed to cultivate good-fellowſhip, and that chriſtian diſpoſition which teaches us to bear with one another's infirmities. But in no caſe is it more

more neceſſary, and in none is it more generally required, than in thoſe who profeſs the religion of Chriſt.

In diſcourſing therefore on the words of the text, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew how unanimity among chriſtians of every denomination might, in a great degree, be promoted, and for what reaſons it ought to be particularly deſired.

The firſt thing that I would recommend is a ſincere love of religion and its intereſts. Had we the cauſe of chriſtianity at heart, we ſhould avoid every thing that might tend to weaken its authority, or diminiſh its glory. The man who from an ambition of being thought a philoſopher, might have been led to form his creed different from the reſt of the world, who not content with the grand eſſentials of religion, has from vanity, caprice, reſtleſſneſs of diſpoſition, or any other cauſe, ſtruck out ſomething which mankind never before heard of, ſhould not preſume to diſſeminate

peculiar tenets, unleſs he was well aſſured of their truth, and convinced not only that they would not prove injurious to the intereſts of chriſtianity, but be thought neceſſary to eternal ſalvation. If by propagating his own ſchiſmatic notions, and combating the eſtabliſhed tenets of others, there is even a probability, that inſtead of convincing his neighbour, he might, perhaps, unſettle his principles, and fill his mind with doubt and uncertainty; or, if inſtead of advancing the cauſe which he wiſhes to promote, he might give freſh ground for infidels to cavil and freſh occaſion for ſceptics to triumph; a true love of religion would teach him to bury his opinions for ever in his own boſom, and make him dwell much rather on thoſe truths in which he and his fellow-chriſtians are all unanimous, than perverſely ſeek after ſubjects on which he might have an opportunity of differing from them, and ſtanding alone. It is not ſufficient that he is, or perhaps, hopes that he is, convinced himſelf, nor is it enough that he

he is a good and conſcious man. Before he ventures to diſturb the order and eſtabliſhment of ſociety, he ought to be aſſured that the grounds of his conviction are ſuch, as, when explained, will give ſatisfaction to the minds of others. Plain, undiſguiſed, neceſſary truth has nothing to fear, and will always make its way in the world. The ſmall body of chriſtians who firſt compoſed the primitive church were fully convinced themſelves, and their firmneſs, their charity, and, above all, their unanimity, fully qualified them for the converſion of the world. The glorious reformation of modern times alſo was undertaken with zeal and earneſtneſs, and ſupported by palpable truth and evident juſtice. The ſtruggle therefore was neither long nor difficult. In a free country, not only the cauſe of religion, but the dignity of human nature was concerned. The progreſs of truth was rapid, and ſuperſtition, bigotry, perſecution and error vaniſhed gradually before it, as the miſts of the morning are diſpelled by the riſing ſun. Since

that glorious period, not only religious truth, but truth of every kind, whether it relates to morals, ſcience or government, has been cultivated with ardor and ſucceſs. In chriſtianity, more particularly, there cannot now be any truths that are *neceſſary*, or very important to be diſcovered. To every honeſt enquirer the reading of the holy goſpel and the epiſtles will furniſh ample means of "growing wiſe unto "ſalvation."

In religion, our conduct ſhould be ſuch as it is with thoſe we love. We ſhould never be on the watch for trifles to create diſſention, but ſatisfied with what is fundamentally right and eſſentially good, ſhould be blind, or at leaſt indifferent, to matters of no conſequence. To the man who is convinced of the neceſſity of revelation and the truth of the goſpel, religion, as an elegant writer obſerves, is a matter of ſentiment, rather than of argument; and, as in our modes of thinking, as well as acting, we all have a ſomething peculiar to ourſelves,

ourſelves, we ſhould be ready to give that liberty of conſcience to others which we are at all times ready to claim. Unleſs where enthuſiaſm would conceal herſelf under the form of pure devotion, or where ignorance is ſo groſs, and error ſo alarming, as to threaten the ſubverſion of morality, and ſuperſede the efficacy of chriſtian duties, we ſhould be extremely tender in combating, or in ſtriving to unſettle the tenets of our neighbour. He that has the love of religion at heart, is concerned for its intereſts and zealous for its truth. It is an object with him that wakes the moſt exalted paſſions of the ſoul. Whenever he directs the attention of his mind to the contemplation of its doctrines, its promiſes and laws, his love, his reverence, his gratitude and adoration are all engaged. As ſuch, therefore, he cannot be indifferent when any of what he deems its truths are called in queſtion. It wounds that ſentiment which he always connects with religious worſhip, and gives him pain, in proportion

proportion as the law of God governs his conduct and influences his heart.

As a further motive of promoting harmony and love, if not perfect unanimity, in points of faith, among chriſtian brethren, let me recommend to you a candid and charitable diſpoſition of mind. It is to be hoped that every diſciple of our Lord poſſeſſes, at leaſt, ſome ſhare of that warm devotion and manly firmneſs, which diſtinguiſhed the primitive apoſtles; and if he looks forward to the promiſes of the goſpel as the crown and conſummation of his glory, when this world ſhall be no more; if he repoſes on the revealed word of God as a ſure refuge in time of trouble; if he profeſſes it as the ſupport, if not the foundation of his principles, and feels its influence in governing his paſſions, helping his infirmities and purifying his heart, he will be as much concerned, and as much injured, if any one ſhould dare to queſtion the reality of his piety and its fruits, as though his

his honor, his integrity and truth were ſuſpected. Before we cenſure, therefore, or condemn, let us charitably believe that there are many wiſe and good men, who agree with us in every thing that is eſſential, though they may have ſome peculiar modes of worſhip and punctilios of doctrine, from which they derive a degree of comfort and ſatisfaction, and which may ſuperadd to their devotion a fervency, which it would otherwiſe, perhaps, have wanted. Some of theſe deviations from general cuſtom might be aſcribed to education, ſome might be attributed to a ſingularity of character that affects novelty in every thing, and others, perhaps, might ariſe from that portion of vanity and ſelf-love, which is lodged in every human breaſt, and which often tempts us to ſtray from the beaten track of duty. It was a rule with the apoſtles, but more particularly with St. Paul, never to contend about matters of this ſort; he always withdrew the attention of his diſciples from every thing that might

might tend only to create perverſe "diſ-
"putings," and directed them to the prac-
tice of the more important duties of chriſ-
tianity, and the belief of its more eſſential
doctrines. Let us not, then, wound the
conſcience of any weak brother, when there
is no neceſſity for it; but let us grant to
every one that indulgence which we wiſh
to enjoy ourſelves. If we poiſon the
ſmalleſt ſource of innocent comfort that
may ſpring up occaſionally in a chriſtian's
mind, we do him an almoſt irreparable
injury; eſpecially when we conſider the
ſhort duration of human life, and the
large portion of it that is occupied by
care, vexation, diſappointment and ſor-
row. If from a miſtaken zeal we ſhould,
by obſtinate perſeverance, or ſuperior advan-
tages, unſettle his preſent tenets in which
he finds ſufficient ſatisfaction, we ſhall not
ſo eaſily be able to eſtabliſh our own in
their ſtead. His underſtanding might for
ever after be tainted with ſcepticiſm, and
his heart rendered incapable of admitting
the

the truths of religion, with any livelineſs of faith, or performing its duties with any warmth of devotion.

HENCE it is that many who have undertaken the laudable, but unſucceſsful taſk of converſion, have often been inſtrumental in ſpreading infidelity, while they intended only reformation and the advancement of truth. The mind, when once convicted of error in matters in which ſhe repoſed for a length of time, perhaps, with confidence and ſecurity, ſometimes acquires the habit of ſuſpecting the poſſibility of truth on almoſt every occaſion, and ſometimes falls into that wavering and unſettled ſtate, which might well be compared to "a reed ſhaken with the wind."

FARTHER, let the knowledge of ourſelves, as well as the true intereſts of religion, teach us to regard our fellow-chriſtians with charity, meekneſs and love. Who is there that can "retire to his chamber, "commune with his own heart and be "ſtill,"

" ſtill," and not find there ſome weakneſſes of character, ſome errors of conduct, and ſome infirmities of temper, which he does not wiſh ſhould be viewed with an eye of tenderneſs? And ſurely not every ſingularity of diſpoſition ſhould be treated with harſhneſs, nor every little deviation from the general practice of life with ſeverity. Where there is ſolid worth and eſtabliſhed virtue, we might forbear to ſcandalize a few peculiar traits of character with the contemptuous appellation of folly, and to magnify a few extravagances of the heart into crimes. If this mutual forbearance be neceſſary to maintain peace and benevolence in our daily intercourſe with the world, and every one knows it to be ſo, it is no leſs neceſſary, in our occaſional intercourſe with chriſtians of every denomination. That candid and charitable diſpoſition of mind, which I wiſh to inculcate, would withhold us from beſtowing, with indiſcriminate cenſure, the opprobrious epithets of bigotry, ſuperſtition or folly on the religious practice of our neihgbour, whoſe principles might be

be as firm, and whoſe piety might be as fervent as our own, though he might ſomewhat differ from us in exterior forms and unavailing ceremonies. If, inſtead of cultivating this meek and amiable temper towards our brethren, we indulge a perverſe ſpirit of wrangling and diſputation on every trifling occaſion, there muſt be an end of all unanimity. Among our moſt intimate and ſincere friends, there will be no general and permanent concordance of ſentiment or opinion, nor can we expect that there will be any, "in the "houſhold of faith, of one heart and one "ſoul." The important intereſts and eternal obligations of religion, that ought always to be felt at the heart, will often be forgotten for the fondneſs of engaging in "a mere battle of words," and the vanity of obtaining victory in argument. Beſides, there ſeems to be a ſomething highly improper, if not impious, in talking with indecent familiarity of the diſpenſations of heaven; in naming "the Great and lofty "One that inhabiteth eternity," without

a due reverence of his glory; in making his attributes the ſubjects of colloquial diſputation; in examining into his eſſence and his nature with vain and idle curioſity, and queſtioning even the extent of his power.

In religious, as well as philoſophical enquiries, there are always certain limits which propriety and a juſt ſenſe of the human capacity will generally determine. To tranſgreſs them in the former, is to enter the mazes of ſcepticiſm and error, or to blunt that internal ſentiment which connects the worſhip of God, and our meditations on his glory, with the moſt exalted emotions of the heart; to paſs beyond them in the latter, is to bewilder ourſelves in the fanciful regions of hypotheſis and the wide bounds of poſſibility. Let us not forget alſo, that the man who is ever ready to ſtart the awful ſubject of religion as a matter for argument, will certainly, in time, make it rather an exerciſe for his underſtanding, than acknowledge it as a divine law

law given to us by the Lord of life to regulate our actions and lead us into all righteous and true holineſs. Nor are thoſe the only ill effects to be dreaded from this abuſe of our faculties. Who does not witneſs almoſt daily, "the bitterneſs and wrath, the anger, clamor and "evil-ſpeaking," that are occaſioned by perverſe and obſtinate diſputation on the moſt frivolous and unintereſting topics? If we look back on paſt times, we ſhall often find the pages of hiſtory blotted and diſgraced with the memorial of horrid perſecutions and cruelty to individuals, ariſing wholly from this evil propenſity of the mind. Let us remember, alſo, that primitive chriſtianity was not corrupted, 'till ſome ſhare of proſperity had lulled its profeſſors into a ſort of indolent ſecurity, and till men aroſe in the church fonder of argument and myſtery, than of performing the practical duties of the goſpel, or of adorning their profeſſion by the ſalutary example of a holy life. It was amidſt the jarring of contending principles and oppoſite opi-

nions, that the errors of popery came to maturity; the bands of ſocial, as well as religious union were diſſolved, and the impoſtor Mahomet found an opportunity, in thoſe evil days of darkneſs and religious confuſion, of erecting the banners of his empire, on the doctrines of the Koran.

LET theſe conſiderations have their due influence on our conduct and behaviour. Let them withdraw our attention from mere trifles, from exterior ſigns and myſterious ſubtilties, to the grand, eſſential duties of a chriſtian. In religion there are too many like the Phariſees of old, who paid tithe of mint, aniſe and cummin, with rigorous exactneſs, but neglected the more weighty points of the law, judgment, mercy and faith. Nor are there wanting among the zealous contenders for trifles, many of thoſe blind guides who will "ſtrain at a "gnat and ſwallow a camel." A chriſtian's warfare conſiſts not in doubting and diſputing, but in guarding the heart againſt the encroachments of ſin, in receiving with grateful

grateful adoration, and fulfilling with pious fidelity, the conditions of eternal ſalvation, and in manifeſting at all times our good-will to others. There is always more that requires to be done than to be underſtood. Independent of ourſelves, many are the claims which others have to our benevolence. Some need the warning voice of experience to guard them from miſery and ruin; ſome might juſtly claim the ſoothing comforts of friendſhip to mitigate their woes, and others might require the hand of chriſtian piety, to point out the path that leads through the miſeries of life, to thoſe manſions of eternal bliſs, "where "only true joy is to be found."

If we hope to experience ſome portion of that unanimity which ſubſiſted among the apoſtles, let us ſtudiouſly imitate their example. If we wiſh to be "of one heart "and one ſoul," let us uſe the ſame means of acquiring that divine union which fully authorized the evangeliſt in the ſtrength and energy of his expreſſion. Examine

the parables of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour; read with attention, the divine diſcourſes which are ſcattered throughout the goſpels, and you will find that every ſentence was calculated to correct ſome religious error of conſequence, to inculcate ſome glorious and important truth, or to rectify ſome abſurd and uncharitable prejudice. Or, reflect on the conduct of the holy apoſtles in their arduous undertaking of converting Jews and Gentiles, to the goſpel of Chriſt. Did they ever deſcend to trifles? Did they ever degrade their divine miniſtry by metaphyſical ſubtilties, or unprofitable knowledge of any kind? On the contrary, did not the great apoſtle, Paul, warn his ſon Timothy againſt it, in the ſtrongeſt terms, and though well-verſed in the learning of the age in which he lived, though eminently qualified to ſhine in the wrangling ſchools of Grecian philoſophy, did he not determine to know nothing among his diſciples, but "Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified?" What were the points of doctrine which Peter and John chiefly

inſiſted

inſiſted on, in the chapter from which I have taken the text, and in other parts of the apoſtolic hiſtory? Theſe three, ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt, the reſurrection of the body after death, and a final ſtate of retribution to every human being in the realms of immortality. Theſe, indeed, ought to be the grand articles of every chriſtian's creed. Theſe were the exalted truths which the apoſtles inſiſted on, for which they even dared to die, and which they propagated with ſuch unanimous zeal and conſtancy, that they might well be ſaid to be "of one heart and ſoul." Provided we are agreed on theſe important doctrines, and the practical duties of chriſtianity which give them vigor and effect, why ſhould we ſeek occaſion for ſpreading diſſention ſtill wider, and eventually, perhaps, bring a ſcandal on the croſs, while we mean to honor it? Why ſhould we not in religion, as in every thing elſe, endeavour to fulfil the apoſtle's precepts, and "as far as it "is poſſible, live peaceably with all men."

But though in matters of ſlight importance, or of no concern, I wiſh you to cultivate that charity and forbearance which are ſo eſſential to the preſervation of unanimity and peace, yet where the real intereſts of chriſtianity are concerned, where the purity of its eſſential doctrines are in danger of being corrupted, or the heavenly ſanction of its laws attempted to be done away, it is incumbent on every one who claims the dignity of being a diſciple of Chriſt, to vindicate his profeſſion, and in the mild and ſteady ſpirit of chriſtian charity, be ready, at all times, to give a reaſonable account "of the hope that is in "him with meekneſs and with fear." I would have him think it as much his duty to do this, as though his honeſty and truth, or any other principle which he deemed moſt dear, were called in queſtion by the world. On ſuch occaſions, you cannot be too much aware of that ſhamefaced candor, and that mean, accommodating temper which are ſo common in the world; which are ſometimes the flimſy

diſguiſe

diſguiſe of libertiniſm or indifference, but oftener the poor reſource of a weak and puſillanimous mind, afraid to avow its own purpoſes, or withheld from doing it by a falſe ſenſe of modeſty and decorum.

If you are in earneſt with regard to religion, if you are not from luke-warmneſs or indolence to be ranked among thoſe, who if they examined their own hearts, might ſay, perhaps, with Agrippa, that they were "almoſt perſuaded to be chriſtians;" if you look up to the revealed word of God as to the rock of your ſalvation; if you ſuffer it to rule your conduct, form your principles and direct your piety; or if you wiſh to derive comfort from it in affliction, and hope that when you lie on the bed of death, "your prayers "and your alms will go up for a memo-"rial before God," you will never ſuffer it to be trifled with, or abuſed within the ſphere of your authority. In proportion as you deſpiſe the ribaldry of a Voltaire,

and the frosty scepticism of Hume, you will exert your influence in checking any thing that might approach to it, in your intercourse with the world. By a prudent mixture of fortitude and gentleness, much good may be done by every member of society. Where we cannot absolutely prevent evil, we may at least signify our disapprobation of it, and not, as is too often the case, countenance obscenity and impiety by indulging a loose, disorderly merriment, at the ludicrous association of sacred with profane ideas, and by expressing a satisfaction which we do not feel, or which at least, in our serious hours, we are ashamed to acknowledge.

With whatever tenderness we may view the venial errors of our neighbour, how ready soever we may be to admit the claims of conscience, the force of example, and the influence of education in religious practice, we must know that vice is always wrong, and that impiety is always sinful.

In

In this at leaſt we may be unanimous, and as chriſtians, are bound to check the growing influence of moral turpitude and corruption of manners, by every means in our power. While we are ready to guard againſt "the ſin that doth ſo eaſily beſet "ourſelves," let us uſe our utmoſt endeavours to ſecure others alſo againſt her dangerous dominion; but more particularly thoſe who are in any reſpect dependent on us. This is to be done, and for the moſt part effectually, as far as relates to our children and domeſtics, by eſtabliſhing fixed and regular habits of devotion, by withdrawing them from the contagion of bad example, and in ſeaſoning their minds with friendly admonition and wholeſome reproof. In thus performing the grand duties which regard ourſelves, our neighbour and the Deity, may we be not only unanimous, but active, earneſt and ſincere. Let no perverſe diſputings, on vain and idle ſubjects, encroach upon that ſmall portion of time which might be ſo much better

ſpent,

ſpent, but whenever an opportunity offers of glorifying God, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, or of doing good to man, by fulfilling the precepts of his ever-ſacred goſpel, there let us at all times be ready to imitate the conduct of the holy apoſtles, and ſhew the world, that we are "of one heart and "one ſoul."

SER-

# SERMON XII.

LUKE X. 33.

*But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was, and when he ſaw him he had compaſſion on him.*

IT was one great object with our bleſſed Lord, while on earth, to eſtabliſh men in ſocial virtue, and to diffuſe the ſentiments of unbounded charity and benevolence throughout the world. He endeavoured in his character, as a moral teacher, to wipe away all illiberal prejudices, which men are apt to harbour againſt one another for difference of opinion, and always inculcated,

culcated, that no national enmity, or private reſentment, ought to prevent the free exerciſe of humanity, or check the ſtrong current of neighbourly love. Superior himſelf to the many weakneſſes and imperfections that debaſe human nature, no injuries, however great, no hatred and malice, however virulent and unprovoked, no perſecutions or afflictions, however cruel and unmerited, could excite any malevolent, or unfriendly paſſions in his boſom, or prevail upon him to forget that impartial kindneſs and affection which he ſhewed to all the world. His whole life, indeed, was one continued labor of love; and, in his laſt moments, he not only forgave thoſe who murdered him himſelf, but alſo poured forth a prayer to his heavenly Father for them. "Father," ſaid he, "forgive them, for they know not "what they do." This univerſal, and unbounded principle of charity, he has labored to inculcate and eſtabliſh in different parts of his holy goſpel. "Love "your enemies; bleſs them that curſe

" you; do good to them that hate you, " and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe " you and perſecute you," are ſome of thoſe divine precepts which are contained in his heavenly ſermon on the mount. The epiſtles of St. Paul and of the other apoſtles, are full of texts that will enforce the ſame bleſſed doctrines; but it may be unneceſſary to multiply quotations from ſcripture to this purpoſe, ſince the divine ſpirit of chriſtian benevolence, on which I mean at preſent to diſcourſe, is beautifully illuſtrated, and moſt delightfully taught, in that charming parable from which the text is taken.

It was addreſſed, it ſeems, to a certain lawyer, who, when he enquired of our Saviour, with no laudable intention we are to ſuppoſe, " what he ſhould do to " inherit eternal life?" Jeſus ſaid, " what " is written in the law? How readeſt " thou? And he anſwering, ſaid, Thou " ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all " thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and " with

" with all thy ſtrength, and with all thy " mind, and thy neighbour as thyſelf. " And he ſaid unto him, thou haſt an- " ſwered right: this do, and thou ſhalt " live." But he, " willing to juſtify him- " ſelf (as St. Luke informs us) ſtill in- " terrogated him further by ſaying, and " who is my neighbour?" Then the bleſſed Son of God, who never ſpake as man ſpoke, uttered the following parable, the beauty and ſimplicity of which cannot, in my opinion, be equalled.

" A certain man (ſaid he) went down " from Jeruſalem to Jericho, and fell " among thieves, which ſtripped him of " his raiment, and wounded him, and de- " parted, leaving him half dead: And, by " chance, there came down a certain prieſt " that way; and, when he ſaw him, he " paſſed by on the other ſide; and likewiſe " a Levite, when he was at the place, came " and looked on him, and paſſed by on " the other ſide: But a certain Samaritan, " as he journeyed, came where he was;

" and

" and when he ſaw him, he had compaſ-
" ſion on him; and went to him, and
" bound up his wounds, pouring in oil
" and wine; and ſet him on his own
" beaſt, and brought him to an inn, and
" took care of him: And, on the mor-
" row, when he departed, he took out
" two-pence, and gave them to the hoſt,
" and ſaid unto him, take care of him, and
" whatſoever thou ſpendſt more, when I
" come again, I will repay thee. Which
" now of theſe three, thinkeſt thou, was
" neighbour unto him that fell among the
" thieves? And he ſaid, he that ſhewed
" mercy on him. Then ſaid Jeſus unto
" him, go, and do thou likewiſe."

THIS I think may be conſidered as one of the moſt delightful leſſons of humanity that ever was delivered, for the improvement of the human heart. It is told with all that dignity and beautiful ſimplicity, which ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed every thing that our bleſſed Saviour ſaid or did: but, in order to ſee its full force, and perceive

ceive its greateſt excellence, it is neceſſary that we ſhould know who the Samaritans were; ſince more than half the merit of this good man's humane and generous behaviour towards the unfortunate Jew, depends upon the peculiar circumſtances of the ſtory. Let me, therefore, beg your attention to a ſhort piece of hiſtory, in order to illuſtrate the ſubject under our preſent conſideration.

THE earlieſt account we have of Samaria is in the ſixteenth chapter of the firſt book of Kings, where we are told, that, "in "the thirty and firſt year of Aſa, king of "Judah, began Omri to reign over Iſrael "twelve years; and he bought the hill "SAMARIA, of Shemer, for two talents "of ſilver, and built on the hill, and "called the name of the city which he "built, after the name of Shemer, owner "of the hill SAMARIA." It was in this city that King Ahab, Omri's ſon and the ſucceeding kings of Iſrael fixed their reſidence. From being the ſeat of royalty

Samaria

Samaria became in proceſs of time, a flouriſhing city, and was ſurrounded with fortifications ſufficiently ſtrong to repel the frequent aſſaults of the Syrian kings. But "in the twelfth year of Ahaz, king of "Judah, began Hoſhea, the ſon of Elah, "to reign in SAMARIA over Iſrael, nine "years; and he did that which was evil "in the ſight of the Lord, but not "as the kings of Iſrael that were before "him. Againſt him came up Shalma-"neſer, king of Aſſyria; and Hoſhea be-"came his ſervant, and gave him pre-"ſents. And the king of Aſſyria found "conſpiracy in Hoſhea; for he had ſent "meſſengers to So, king of Egypt, and "brought no preſent to the king of Aſ-"ſyria, as he had done year by year; "therefore the king of Aſſyria ſhut him "up, and bound him in priſon. Then "the king of Aſſyria came up through-"out all the land, and went up to SA-"MARIA, and carried Iſrael away into "Aſſyria, and placed them in Halah and

" in Habor, by the river of Gozan, and " in the cities of the Medes*."

FROM this captivity the people of Iſrael never returned, and Shalmaneſer ſent tribes from various nations of the Eaſt, to take poſſeſſion of the country which he had depopulated. The ſacred hiſtory informs us, that they came from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim. Theſe people were conſequently Heathens and Idolaters, and introduced their reſpective idols into the land which their ſovereign had vanquiſhed; but thinking they had provoked the divine vengeance, in having neglected to worſhip the God of the country, they requeſted and obtained from their king a Jewiſh prieſt who reſided at Bethel, and taught them the law of Moſes, " and how they ſhould fear the " Lord." The idolatrous nations, however, ſtill adhered to their favorite ſuperſtitions, and might indeed have received ſome

* 2 Kings xvii.

encou-

encouragement from the former practices of the ten revolted tribes, who had never wholly abſtained from the worſhip of idols. But the miniſtry of the Jewiſh prieſt was not altogether without effect. They were at length prevailed on to acknowledge the divine authority of the five books of Moſes, though many rejected it, and thoſe who pretended to be proſelytes, it is obſervable, never kept the ſabbath with any ſtrictneſs. The religion of the country, therefore, was a mixture of Judaiſm and idolatry.

These Eaſtern adventurers had now for more than two centuries inhabited their new ſettlements, when the people of Judah returned from the Babyloniſh captivity, furniſhed, by the liberality of Cyrus, with a commiſſion to rebuild their temple, and preſented with all the maſſy plate of gold and ſilver which Nebuchadnezzar had taken to adorn it. The Samaritans, it appears, regarded the Jews on their return with an eye of jealouſy, and treated their attempt to rebuild the temple with ſcorn and deri-

ſion. Nor is it to be ſuppoſed that the people of Judah who had long been taught to conſider Samaria as the ſeat of civil ſlaughter, hereſy and ſchiſm, were more inclined to cultivate peace than their idolatrous neighbours. This mutual diſpoſition to enmity was increaſed by a variety of cauſes. They irritated the Jews by confidently aſſerting, though without foundation, that they were in poſſeſſion of the true and genuine copy of the Pentateuch. They were further odious to them, becauſe they ſtill united the groſs and impure rites of their idolatry, with the worſhip of the one true God, as taught by Moſes. Beſides, their behaviour to the Jews on their return from captivity was, it muſt be owned, treacherous and baſe; for under the maſk of friendſhip and a pretence of aſſiſting them in rebuilding their temple, they at firſt indulged a hope of preventing, or at leaſt of interrupting, the further proſecution of the work; and when they found that this inſidious conduct did not ſucceed, they accuſed the Jews of rebellion to Artaxerxes,

who iſſued an order for putting a ſtop to the building.

In the ſecond year of the reign of Darius, king of Perſia, the undertaking however was renewed, and carried on with increaſing zeal and alacrity. When the walls were built, the animoſity of the Samaritans broke out again in expreſſions of virulence and contempt. Nor did they ſtop here, but proceeded to open violence; for Nehemiah relates that, "when Sanballat and "Tobiah heard that the walls of Jeruſa-"lem were made up, and that the breaches "began to be ſtopped, they were very "wroth, and conſpired together with others "to come and to fight againſt Jeruſalem "and to hinder it."

We learn alſo that Nehemiah, who, in conjunction with Ezra, was appointed to carry on the building, and to re-eſtabliſh the Jews in their religious worſhip, turned out Manaſſeh the ſon* of Joiada and the

* Joſephus aſſerts, that he was brother of Jaddus the high prieſt.

grandſon of Eliaſhib the high prieſt, becauſe he had married Nicaſa, the daughter of Sanballat the Chuthite, who governed Samaria, during the reign of Darius; and farther, perhaps, becauſe this Sanballat was the man who had been ſo active in oppoſing and diſtreſſing the Jews, in the proſecution of their pious undertaking. After Manaſſeh was thus excommunicated, his father petitioned Alexander the Great, who had juſt then obtained his ſignal victory over the unfortunate Darius, for leave to build a temple, like that at Jeruſalem, upon Mount Gerizim, which was near Samaria. The king condeſcended to grant his requeſt—the temple was built, and his ſon Manaſſeh appointed the high prieſt of it. The conſequence was, that thoſe Jews, who were excluded from the temple at Jeruſalem, for any violation of their laws, ſuch as profaning the ſabbath, eating unclean meats, and other enormities, found a refuge here; particularly, as Joſephus relates, many prieſts and other Iſraelites, who had married ſtrange women, were admitted into the temple on Mount Gerizim,

zim, and ſuffered to exerciſe the peculiar religion of their country, under the countenance and protection of Manaſſeh the high prieſt, who was ſtrenuouſly ſupported by the wealth and power of his father-in-law. This gave great offence to the Jews, as it ſerved, in ſome meaſure, to deſtroy the force of their laws; for the dread of offence became leſs violent, of courſe, when the delinquents knew how to evade the puniſhment.

The breach between the two people was made ſtill wider, by the letter which the Samaritans preſented to Antiochus Epiphanes, who had juſt before perſecuted the Jews with the moſt brutal cruelty, on account of their religion, and who, not contented with having plundered their temple, had wantonly polluted their altars. This letter, or petition, was replete with meanneſs, falſhood and hypocriſy. It began with the moſt abject flattery, and with an impious proſtitution of language, was addreſſed to Antiochus Ephiphanes, the illuſ-

trious God. It expreſsly declared that the Samaritans had no connection with the Jews, and that their origin and religious cuſtoms were different; it ſtated, that they had been led, partly through their misfortunes, and partly through a regard to an ancient ſuperſtition, to join the Jews in celebrating a feſtival, which they called the ſabbath; it then ſet forth, that Antiochus had juſtly puniſhed thoſe abandoned people, called the Jews; and after aſſerting that they had built a temple on Mount Gerizim, in which they performed ſacrifice, but which had hitherto the name of no God, concluded with begging that it might be dedicated to the Grecian Jupiter.

SAMARIA, as we have obſerved, after the captivity of the ten tribes, was peopled by wanderers of various nations that emigrated from the Eaſt, who were all originally idolaters; but as they muſt have mixed with many of the people of Iſrael, on their taking poſſeſſion of the country, and as great numbers in ſucceeding ages, for

for the reaſons we have above mentioned, were continually flocking to them, becauſe they had a temple on Mount Gerizim to go to, in which the law of Moſes was read publickly, and the Jewiſh ceremonies, I ſuppoſe, duly performed, the whole country, in proceſs of time, approached very near to that form of worſhip, which was preſcribed in the ſcripture by God to the Jews. But this did not at all ſerve to reconcile them to their offended neighbours, or mitigate, in the leaſt, that enmity which was between them. For the inveterate hatred which the Jews conceived againſt them originally, from the oppoſition which was made againſt them by Sanballat, while they were rebuilding their temple, had been ſo exceedingly exaſperated and increaſed, from time to time, on account of the ſhelter which they afforded to the rebellious and excommunicated Jews, that they denounced the heavieſt curſe againſt them they poſſibly could. It cut off all kind of intercourſe and communication with them; it declared all the fruits, both of their land

and

and cattle unclean; it precluded every poſſibility of their becoming proſelytes, and endeavoured to deſtroy, as far as poſſible, their hopes of the reſurrection, and eternal life. There are two or three paſſages in St. John's goſpel, that will ſerve to confirm this account of the enmity which ſubſiſted between the Jews and the Samaritans. He tells us, "our bleſſed Lord being wearied "with his journey, ſat down on Jacob's "Well, and a woman of Samaria came "there to draw water; and he ſaid unto her, "Give me to drink; but ſhe anſwered, how "is it that thou, being a Jew, aſkeſt drink "of me, who am a woman of Samaria? for "(rejoins the holy evangeliſt) the Jews "have no dealings with the Samaritans." Rancorous indeed muſt have been that national hatred, which could make her heſitate to give a weary and thirſty traveller a draught of water; and that it was ſo, we may learn from another circumſtance; for when the Jews meant to caſt the ſevereſt and moſt ignominious reproach on our Saviour, they exclaimed, in the bitterneſs

neſs of malice, " Thou art a Samaritan, " and haſt a devil." In confirmation of the above, we may alſo quote the virulent expreſſion of the ſon of Sirach, " two " nations my ſoul hateth, the Samaritans " and the Philiſtines."

Now, therefore, having entered into this neceſſary explanation, let us review the ſtory. We find the Prieſt and the Levite, who, though they were his countrymen, when they ſaw him, uncharitably " paſſed by on the other ſide." But the good Samaritan, though he was one of thoſe people whom the Jews utterly deteſted and abhorred, had compaſſion on him, bound up his wounds, ſet him on his own beaſt, and brought him to an inn, where he had him taken care of at his own expence. Not all the national hatred, which the Jews on every occaſion, ſo diſgracefully exerciſed againſt his fellow-countrymen, nor that heavy curſe which had been denounced againſt them in the full rancour of malice and revenge, could repreſs the kind

kind emotions of pity and compaſſion, or make him forget thoſe offices of common humanity, which were due to him, as a citizen of the world, and which he rightly judged every good man was bound to perform. This, as our bleſſed Redeemer infers, is the duty of a neighbour. But, with what gentleneſs and delicacy has he cenſured, or rather complained of the neglect of this great duty among the Jews, by repreſenting, in this beautiful parable, one of their Prieſts and Levites as paſſing by, without attending to the misfortune and diſtreſs of one of their own brethren, who would have periſhed by the way's ſide, perhaps, had not the principles of true charity and benevolence brought an enemy to his aſſiſtance; a man who was ever ready to ſtretch out his hand to the unfortunate wherever he found them; one whoſe ſenſe of virtue was ſuperior to the mean and malignant ſpirit of revenge, and who therefore could extend his bounty even to his enemies.

But let us not ſuppoſe this admirable leſſon of ſocial love and duty, was intended for the particular purpoſe only of reproaching the Jews, or of anſwering his vain enquiry who gave riſe to it. The precepts of chriſtianity were meant for all mankind to profit by, and to extend ſalvation to the end of the world. I wiſh I could be juſtified in ſaying, that mankind at large have profited by this bleſſed advice of our Lord and Saviour, which is the ſubject of our preſent conſideration, and, influenced by his example, had opened their hearts to the gentle ſentiments of charity and love. But, if we look abroad into the world, we ſhall often find that the moſt trifling difference among men, whether in religion, politics, or even in matters of idle ſpeculation, will not only check the exerciſe of every friendly and benevolent work, but kindle alſo the malignant paſſions of perſecution, hatred and revenge. Indeed, we ſhall not, I preſume, be thought to tranſgreſs the bounds of truth, when we affirm, that there do not exiſt between man

and man, who may be ſuppoſed to live in ſociety without pique or prejudice, envy or diſpute, thoſe ſentiments of mutual benevolence, that readineſs and pleaſure to lend ſuch aſſiſtance to another, in the hour of misfortune and adverſity, as religion hath enjoined, and the laws of ſocial virtue always have required. Yet, while the practice of the world affords but too juſt ground to warrant theſe general aſſertions, let it be our peculiar glory that this country ſtands unrivalled, by ſurrounding nations, in charitable and humane inſtitutions; in thoſe benevolent plans of every deſcription which are formed for the relief and protection of the wretched. It was from the ſame liberal ſpirit alſo, that thoſe public bodies were incorporated, by which commerce has been ſo effectually enlarged, and an intercourſe opened between the moſt diſtant nations; by which the various ſtates of human ſociety have been made familiar to us, the bleſſings of religion extended, and civilization wonderfully promoted. Such are the glorious effects of charity, public ſpirit and

extenſive

extenſive benevolence; and ſuch, I truſt, are the virtues that will diſtinguiſh us, among our co-temporary citizens of the world, even to the lateſt poſterity.

Let us ſtudy, as far as we are individually concerned, to maintain this illuſtrious character, by embracing every opportunity of doing good and rendering ourſelves uſeful to mankind. Not to mention thoſe rewards which religion beſtows, and thoſe ſuperior gratifications which the exerciſe of good works always afford, one might ſuppoſe, indeed, that even a regard to ourſelves would diſpoſe us to imitate, at an humble diſtance, thoſe heavenly examples of divine love which our bleſſed Lord throughout his whole life exhibited. For where is that man who, though he refuſes aſſiſtance to another in the trying hour of ſorrow and calamity, would not himſelf be glad to look up to thoſe above him for protection and relief, ſhould providence ever throw him into the ſame hard condition?

condition? And where is he, however great his poſſeſſions, however high his ſtation, who can enſure ſtability to his affairs, or guard againſt the many viciſſitudes of fortune? Let us remember that Job, "the "greateſt of all the men of the Eaſt," was, in a very ſhort time, deprived of all, and reduced to the loweſt ebb of wretchedneſs and miſery. The hiſtories of the world will furniſh us with many examples of men, who have been kings or emperors to-day, and ſlaves or beggars to-morrow; thoſe who one day have exerciſed oppreſſive cruelty over their fellow-creatures, have been the next obliged to ſubmit to the yoke themſelves, and have relied for ſafety and protection upon that clemency which they forgot to uſe. The exerciſe of chriſtian benevolence, therefore, is both prudence and a duty which we owe ourſelves, as well as the dictates of religion and virtue.

But this great duty is not to be confined within the narrow bounds of partial friend-

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ſhip or national regard. It ſhould be as diffuſive as the good Samaritan's was; it ſhould extend to the meaneſt wretch in creation, and relieve misfortune wherever it may be found; nor ſhould it ſtop here; its benignant influence ſhould reach even to our enemies; it ſhould be as unconfined as the bright ſun-beams that animate the world, and, with regard to national diſtinctions, as regardleſs of its object as the fruitful dews of heaven. "For," ſays our bleſſed Redeemer, "if ye love "them which love you, what reward "have you? Do not even the publicans "the ſame? Be ye therefore perfect," he adds, "even as your Father which is in "heaven is perfect."

LET us all endeavour to profit by theſe his divine precepts, and let our lives ſhew that he has not died to eſtabliſh them for us in vain. Fortune, it is true, ſeldom affords us an opportunity of performing acts of kindneſs that are extenſively uſeful, and

we may paſs through life, perhaps, without ever having ſuch an object as the unfortunate Jew preſented to our notice. We are not, therefore, to wait for any extraordinary occaſion to ſhew our duty towards our neighbour, but rather cultivate at all times that charitable diſpoſition, which it is evident the good Samaritan poſſeſſed, and which extends not only to the duties, but the decencies of life; which conſtantly diſplays itſelf in the exerciſe of many little endearing offices of courteſy and kindneſs, and which contributes much more to domeſtic happineſs and comfort, than a mind ſatisfied with being caſually generous, and only fond of ſplendid actions of benevolence. Let us then, next to the worſhipping of the everlaſting Father, in all righteouſneſs and true holineſs, be ever ready to cultivate and promote the happineſs and welfare of our fellow-creatures, by imitating the virtues and example of the good Samaritan. Let us not bring upon ourſelves the guilt of

of thoſe who honored God with their lips, but whoſe hearts were far from him, for we may reſt aſſured, that "faith with-"out works is dead," and that "if we "know theſe things, and do them not, "the greater will be our condemnation."

# SERMON XIII.

MATT. XXV. 13.

*Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.*

MAN, in the earlieſt ages of the world, when communities firſt began to be eſtabliſhed, muſt have found many inducements to the practice of virtue from the neceſſary conditions of humanity, and the almoſt involuntary reflections of his own mind. The many eventual evils to which human life is continually expoſed, were almoſt ſufficient of themſelves to teach a ra-

tional creature the great duties which he owed ſociety. Without calling in the aid of religion, or inſiſting on the exiſtence of a moral principle in the human heart, which invariably dictates the purſuit of virtue, and as invariably oppoſes the practice of vice, we might trace the ſocial duties to another ſource; that of ſelf-love. Men could ſee their friends and neighbours at all times, and in all places, afflicted with diſeaſes, or harraſſed with diſtreſſes of various kinds, and could perceive, that no ſituation was ſecure from thoſe evils which threaten us from within and from without. When, therefore, they ſaw ſome pining in poverty, others ſmitten with anguiſh, or labouring under the afflictions of providence, what could awaken pity more, or lay a ſtronger claim to their beneficence, than the painful reflection, that every one was ſubject to the like calamities, and that the revolution of a day might bring them over their heads!

HENCE the tear of compaſſion has flowed, and from this prevailing motive, which ſprings in every boſom, the heart of charity has been warmed, when religion's voice was ſilent, or regarded without reverence, and the will of the Deity not ſufficiently underſtood. Hence it was that men eſtabliſhed the fundamental maxims of virtue, and firſt of all, perhaps, ſaw the reaſonableneſs, and felt the juſtice of "doing "unto others, as we would that they "ſhould do unto us."

BUT this conſideration, however univerſal, was inſufficient to confirm men in the practice of virtue, or govern their conduct with that ſteadineſs, which ought to accompany every moral influence. We are creatures too imperfect to be ſtrictly engaged to our duty by many motives, much leſs was it to be expected from one only. We are conſtantly deceiving ourſelves by hope or fear, and becoming dupes to the pride and vanity of our own hearts. We are too elated with confidence, in the day of

proſperity, to ſuffer eventual evil to diſturb our felicity, and, by the ſame conſtitution of the mind, too much depreſſed in adverſity, either to bear the ills of life with fortitude, or look forward with the eye of faith to proſpects of future comfort.

OTHER principles of action were therefore neceſſary for beings ſubject to ſuch weakneſs and imperfection. Hope, and that vain idea of ſecurity which always attends proſperity, while it taught men to reject the intruſions of future evil, oftentimes ſuppreſſed pity and checked the exerciſe of common humanity. The truth is, we are not to be governed by caſualties. The paſſions cannot be regulated, nor the will controuled, but by principles which are in themſelves fixed and determinate.

FOR this purpoſe the Almighty hath revealed his will to us, through his only begotten Son, and eſtabliſhed certain laws, which are alone to be conſidered as the criterion of human actions, and our only ſure

ſure guide to piety and virtue. Theſe laws will be found, by every one who rightly conſiders them, wonderfully adapted to improve our nature, and promote the happineſs of the world. Nor has the great Author of our being been leſs ſolicitous to ſhew us the neceſſity of our conſtant obedience to them, than he was at firſt to eſtabliſh them. They are enforced in the ſtrongeſt manner by many conſiderations that muſt, at times, of neceſſity ariſe in every one's mind. The limits of a diſcourſe oblige me to confine myſelf to one only, and that indeed is what the words of the text in ſome meaſure require. I mean the awful conſideration of death and futurity.

THAT there is to be another ſtate of exiſtence for all human beings, in which they will be either happy or miſerable according to their actions while in this life, and that the ſoul of man can never die, are the grand outlines of every religion. However good men may ſometimes differ among

among themſelves with reſpect to modes of worſhip; however anxious every one may be to ſettle his tenets of belief, and pay his religious homage to the Father of all mercies, in that manner which ſeems moſt agreeable to his underſtanding and his conſcience, the great object of all is the happineſs of another world. Without this perſuaſion there could be no motive to worſhip the Deity beyond what the immediate fear of his power created; nor any ſecurity for virtue beyond what ſelf-intereſt and ſelf-love afforded. Man, indeed, ſoon ſaw the neceſſity of a future ſtate, in order to reconcile the diſpenſations of providence with the divine attributes. The pious ſoon learned to hope for it, and the wicked ſoon learned to dread it. The end of revelation was to propoſe it to all mankind for their belief, and fully to diſcloſe that glorious light which the eye of reaſon after all its exertion could but faintly perceive. I need not tell you with what diſintereſted love and unbounded charity to all the world the chriſtian revelation was eſtabliſhed, nor would

would I repeat the great moral condition on which it confers happineſs, but to remind you of its conſiſtency with human reaſon in that univerſal maxim of ſocial duty which I have already noticed. "Do "unto others as ye would that they ſhould "do unto you," is the law and the prophets, our Lord tells us, as well as the dictates of the human mind; with this all-powerful motive added to it, that the one has the proſpect of eternal happineſs to enforce its obſervance, and the other little more than convenience, and the fortuitous gratifications of ſelf-love.

YES, the religion of Chriſt Jeſus has ſomething more noble and exalted for its object than the happineſs of this world. The bleſſings and rewards of a pious man are lodged in futurity; nor are they ſubject to any of thoſe contingencies which vex human life with ſorrow and diſappointment, but extend to all eternity invariably perfect. Theſe rewards however are not to be enjoyed without death. The dark

dark and melancholy regions of the grave muſt be paſſed, before we can indulge the hope of mixing " with the ſpirits of juſt " men made perfect." Such is the condition of humanity, ſuch, we know, is the will of heaven. While then we paſs the few years allotted for our exiſtence here, what can ſo effectually ſerve to keep us in the conſtant obſervance of our duty, as the contemplation of that awful period which cloſes the ſcene of human life, and opens the boundleſs proſpect of eternity? All other motives to piety and goodneſs ſeem weak and ineffectual when compared with this. It is true, we may relieve a fellow-creature in diſtreſs from a ſuppoſition that chance or providence may throw ourſelves into the ſame wretched condition, or we might occaſionally yield to the emotions of pity, and gratify a paſſion that ſprings from ſome ſecret, or uncertain ſource. This, however, is duty that reſts on a very unſettled foundation; for while the ſtrange viciſſitudes of human affairs afford us a probability that we ſhall never know the miſeries

miſeries of poverty, or need the beneficence of others, we ſhall only practiſe the ſocial virtues from a principle that fluctuates with the involuntary impulſes of the heart, that exiſts to-day and not to-morrow, and is, perhaps, as uncertain as the weather or the winds. But death is certain; make this the great motive of living well, and you act from a principle that never varies. Here is no admiſſion for the deluſions of fancy, nor the many partial repreſentations of vanity and ſelf-love. "It is appointed "unto all men once to die, and after that "the judgment." Were it to happen to a thouſand and one only eſcape, there would be ſome ground for human folly to practiſe ſelf-deluſion. But ſince all muſt die, ſince the body muſt ſoon return to duſt, and the ſpirit to the God who gave it, this ought ſurely to make us conſtant in the uniform diſcharge of every ſocial and religious duty. What ought to keep us always on our guard too, and never ſuffer us to loſe ſight of futurity, is the awful conſideration, that "we know neither the day nor the hour "wherein the Son of Man will come to

" judge us." The famous Athenian philoſopher, unaſſiſted by divine revelation, could aſk what elſe deſerved a wiſe man's ſerious conſideration, but death and the future ſtate of exiſtence allotted to human beings. From frequent meditation on a ſubject ſo awful and ſublime, we might hope, indeed, that, under the influence of divine grace, every thing excellent in piety and beautiful in morals would proceed. In endeavouring to enforce this, as the great principle of action, I can urge no more than the moſt ignorant knows. Do you believe there is a juſt God? A Being who will puniſh wickedneſs and reward virtue? Satisfy yourſelves on this head, and the conſideration of death as a motive of living well, will appear in all its force to the moſt illiterate, as well as to the moſt enlightened mind. We know that we are drawing near to that period which is to put an end to all our purſuits, and render us " dead to the things of this " world;" when it will be too late for repentance, and when remorſe for paſt crimes, inſtead of producing amendment

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will only excite deſpair; the anguiſh of a rebuking ſpirit, that always warned us of "a certain fearful looking-for of judg-"ment," and bade us, inſtead of running on with heedleſs joy in the vain circle of worldly pleaſures, "Watch and pray leſt "we entered into temptation." Were I to deſcribe the impreſſions which the thoughts of death muſt make on the human mind, in thoſe pious moments, when, in obedience to the word of God, we commune with our own hearts, I could preſent no images, perhaps, but what are familiar to every man's boſom. The misfortune only is that they have not been permanent; never thought of, or attended to but for the preſent hour, nor had any uniform influence on the government of the heart. Who is there that has not his fears ſometimes alarmed, and his ſenſibility ſufficiently awakened, to make the impreſſion of death and futurity durable enough to follow him into his retirements, keep him on his guard, and excite in his boſom the calm and ſteady ſpirit of devotion? Is not the dreadful uncer-

tainty of life ſufficient to make us call on our God, and pray for the interceſſion of a Saviour, whenever we lay ourſelves on the pillow of reſt, and whenever we wake once more to view the riſing ſun? When we go to the houſe of mourning, feel the languid pulſe, and ſee the ſure approach of death, when we hear the faultering voice of friendſhip ſpeak his dying, laſt farewel, and watch the parting anguiſh of a ſpirit, that is about to take its anxious and uncertain flight for ever and for ever; who is there that does not hear, or ſeem to hear "the ſtill, ſmall voice" of conſcience whiſper to him thus, "It is thy lot next, perhaps, therefore prepare—how many years are loſt! Time flies with ſwift and ſilent ſtep—be reſolute and fixed before it is too late—nature calls thee hence, religion bids thee watch; for thou knoweſt not the day nor the hour of thy departing."

If we conſult experience, we ſhall find that ſuch thoughts have been often intruded on our minds, and we need only attend

attend to the corresponding emotions which they excited for the moment to learn our duty. It is indeed a mark of divine wisdom, which we cannot sufficiently admire, that the great motives of action are rendered equally evident to all; and men do not need so much to be taught their duty, as to be reminded of it. The ancients were so fully convinced of the plainness of the arguments which death offered every man to husband his time to the best advantage, and lead a life of piety and virtue, that they seem to have thought the remembrance of it sufficient; and, indeed, "Remember "death," might be regarded, I think, as one of the wisest precepts that they have to boast of.

But as objects in contemplation will never affect the mind like those that are present, we should do well to make the frequent and successive loss of our friends, new inducements to the faithful discharge of our duty, and the effectual remembrance of our uncertain state. So precarious is

the life of man, ſo many are continually dropping around us, ſome quick as the ſhock that ſtrikes from heaven, others, again, ſinking into the grave by ſlow and gradual decay, that no one, I truſt, will ever want a memento of this ſort to teach him how to die. The awful miniſter of heaven viſits us at all ſeaſons, in every varied ſhape. Seldom does a year paſs over our heads, but the death of ſome one who contributed either to our happineſs, our intereſt, or pleaſures, bids us remember, and watch for ourſelves.

SHOULD any of us ſtill be diſpoſed to linger away life in forgetful ſecurity, deaf to ſuch powerful calls, let us reflect that not an hour is our own; that the diſpenſations of fate are in Almighty hands, and that ſome one, attached to us by the deareſt ties, might be the next ſad argument to remind us of our duty, perhaps, and tell us that we too ſoon muſt die.

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I HAVE only to add my earneſt wiſh, that the awful ſubject itſelf of this day's contemplation might have its due influence on your minds. It is a ſubject in which every human being is intereſted, and which, to uſe the words of a great philoſopher, "comes home to every man's buſineſs and boſom." Let not the thought of futurity, then, which will ſoon be the object of all our concern, paſs by us unheeded as the ſlumbers of the morning, but let it, if poſſible, produce a conduct ſteady and conſtant, as the principle from which it ought to ſpring.

IT is the property only of weak or guilty minds to be occaſionally alarmed at accidents, and frightened, for a moment, into a ſenſe of duty. A rational man duly reflects on the conditions of humanity, and ſees the neceſſity of living agreeably to them. Melancholy experience convinces him, that eternity might be ſuſpended on a moment, and this ſhould keep him ever on his guard, leſt that fatal moment might

chance to be ſpent in riotous and prophane pleaſure, or in the tranſgreſſion of ſome ſacred command. Let him who has hitherto neglected this call to vigilance in the diſcharge of his duty, henceforth liſten to the heavenly voice of his bleſſed Lord and Saviour with greater reverence. Let the divine precept of the text live in his boſom, amidſt all the occupations of a buſy world, as well as accompany him in the hours of ſolitary leiſure and retirement. This will teach him to regard death, not as an object that excites either grief or terror, but as the means by which the all-gracious Father calls good men, through the mediation of Chriſt Jeſus, into a better ſtate of exiſtence, that he might diſtinguiſh them with further marks of his divine favor and protection, in thoſe regions of immortal bliſs, "where only true joy is to be found."

If the conſiderations which have been ſuggeſted to you carry any weight, if they produce any effect, let it not, for heaven's ſake, be the involuntary impreſſion of a moment;

ment; but let it ſink deep into the heart. Not that it is to fright us from the moderate and chearful enjoyments of life, or caſt over our minds the gloom of ſuperſtitious fear; but that it might become a ſettled and habitual principle of action, nor ever fail to guide us in our duty towards our neighbour and our God; a principle that might regulate our affections, and teach us to practiſe the mild virtues of chriſtianity, with the meek and humble ſpirit that animates the goſpel; a principle that might enable us to "repent, for the king-"dom of heaven is at hand." This exhortation of the venerable Baptiſt is ſalutary at all times, for no one has a moment to loſe or trifle away in idle inactivity. The longer we live the nearer are we drawing to that awful period which wafts us into eternity. Nothing can retard our progreſs; ſleeping or awake, on we journey to the place of our appointed reſt; where the world and all its pleaſures will intereſt us no more than the toys that pleaſed our infancy, and the ſoul will look forward

with anxious terror only to that tremendous ſcene which lies beyond the grave. In the trying hour of our departure from this world, nothing can ſupport us but the conſciouſneſs of virtue, and the heavenly hope that reſults from the practice of true religion; religion, that may give us ſome claim to eternal ſalvation, from an humble confidence, that "we have done juſtice, "loved mercy, and walked humbly with "our God."

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# SERMON XIV.

PROV. xvi. 32.

*He that is ſlow to anger, is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his ſpirit, than he that taketh a city.*

THE farther we carry our reſearches into the nature of moral and religious duty, the more fully ſhall we be convinced of the importance of an early diſcipline over the paſſions, and a ſteady attention to the government of our conduct. Not only thoſe propenſities, which are in themſelves evil, require the conſtant reſtraint of reaſon and religion; but even

ſuch principles as are founded in benevolence, and ſpring from the moſt amiable diſpoſitions, often need the warning voice of prudence to check their ardor, leſt they ſhould paſs beyond the ſtated limits of virtue, and, inſtead of producing happineſs to ourſelves and others, prove only the ſource of miſery and diſappointment. Such indeed are the frailties and imperfections of human nature, that even our virtues are often blended with correſponding vices, and always united with errors congenial to them. But ſo wide is the dominion of ſin, and ſo common is the depravity of the heart of man, that, previous to the cultivation of good diſpoſitions, is the duty of guarding againſt evil ones. We cannot hope that the good ſeed will thrive and bring forth fruit an hundred-fold, until the ground has been cleanſed of the thorns and briars that would choak it; and before we can expect to enjoy that gracious light which is from above, we muſt, to uſe the beautiful and expreſſive language of ſcripture, become, if poſſible, as a little child.

THE writer who attempts to develope with truth and candor the frailties and imperfections, the vices and corruptions of the human heart, is rather embarraſſed by the variety of ſubjects that preſent themſelves to his contemplation. A wild, luxuriant field lies before him, and the underſtanding is abundantly employed in ſelecting, out of an almoſt infinite and diſordered number, a few diſtinguiſhed plants that are worth our care and cultivation, or in rooting out ſome of thoſe noxious weeds which, like the tares among the wheat, ſhould be gathered into bundles in order to be burnt and deſtroyed.

THE particular evil to which I wiſh at preſent to direct your attention, and which in every ſeaſon of life, but more particularly in youth, cannot be too carefully guarded againſt, is what ſelf-love, I know, would be content to call a foible, or a mere natural infirmity; but which, I fear, religion will always aſſociate with vice, and condemn as ſinful. I mean a peeviſh temper,

per and an irritable diſpoſition; which I ſhall conſider, as the ſource of continual unhappineſs to ourſelves and others; and as incompatible with that frame of mind which Chriſtianity teaches and requires us to cultivate.

The ills and vexations of life are ſufficiently numerous of themſelves, without cheriſhing ſuch diſpoſitions in our own boſoms, as are calculated to give them additional violence. The beſt tempers will ſometimes be ruffled, and the higheſt ſenſe of perſonal dignity, united to the utmoſt efforts of a cultivated mind, are not always ſufficient to guard us againſt the encroachments of violent paſſions, and thoſe debaſing circumſtances of conduct, which are almoſt inſeparable from them. But theſe effects ſeldom happen. Life does not abound with ſuch extraordinary events as might often kindle the tranſports of any paſſion, whether anger, grief, joy or reſentment, in the boſom of a Chriſtian. The tenor of the Goſpel would teach him

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to view the various appearances of this world, with calmneſs and moderation. The follies of mankind will chiefly excite his pity, and their errors his charity. Inſtead of being tranſported with rage againſt thoſe whoſe ſentiments, or, perhaps, whoſe prejudices differ from his own, he will be ready to grant that independent conduct and liberty of thought to others which he claims himſelf, and will at all times be diſpoſed to judge with candor and moderation.

How very different is the picture of a paſſionate man's mind and conduct! Every trifling event that ſuits not exactly with his peculiar mode of thinking, that croſſes his exorbitant wiſhes, or that ſeems to thwart his fancied pleaſures, is magnified into a real evil, and for the moment makes him truly wretched. The happineſs of others, indeed, may be occaſionally annoyed by the idle agitations of his mind, but in general, he is himſelf the principal ſufferer. And it is a proof both of the wiſ-

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dom and goodneſs of Providence, that no inconſiderable degree of miſery is invariably connected with the indulgence of every malignant and vicious propenſity of nature. No one ever harboured in his boſom the gloomy paſſion of anger, hatred and revenge, without feeling a pang that corroded his own heart, while he wiſhed to diſturb the peace of others. But, on the contrary, the exerciſe of every benevolent affection is invariably accompanied with the moſt pleaſing emotions, and the moſt delightful ſatisfaction. We may carry the ſame mode of reaſoning farther, and remark, that with every vicious indulgence, there is always ſome correſponding curſe, or miſery, annexed by way of puniſhment. The intemperate man, as well as the libertine, are undermining their health (without which no bleſſing can be enjoyed) while they are in the purſuit of vicious pleaſures. He too, who, in toiling after riches and honours, has trampled under foot every law, both human and divine, feels at length in the hour of imper-

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fect enjoyment, all his happineſs embittered by the remorſe of conſcience, and perhaps the general contempt of the more virtuous part of mankind.

The experience of repeated hours of vexation and ſorrow, which ſprung wholly from internal diſorder and irritable paſſions, has led ſome, from mere ſelf-love, at a more advanced ſeaſon of life, to enure their minds to diſcipline, and taught them the advantage and neceſſity of "keeping "the heart with all diligence." It were to be wiſhed that we could learn, from reflection and the precepts of religion, thoſe truths which a few only have gained, after years perhaps of pain and ſorrow. Conſider, are the few ſcanty hours of comfort and ſatisfaction which this world affords to be trifled with? Should they be continually embittered, and ſometimes deſtroyed, for want of cultivating thoſe diſpoſitions that are neceſſary to teach us their true nature and proper value? We are not here to expect perfection. We muſt ſometimes

times bear with the weakneſs, and even the folly of our neighbour, if we wiſh our converſation with the world to be blameleſs, and the intercourſes of domeſtic life to be productive of peace. Not every trifling injury ſhould kindle the ſpark of anger in our hearts, or make us eager to "drink at the waters of ſtrife." Beſides, when we are influenced by paſſion, we are under the greateſt and moſt dangerous deluſion. Circumſtances and events preſent themſelves to the mind, as objects appear to the eye through a miſt, indiſtinctly, and beyond their real magnitude. We often feel the painful emotions of reſentment when no inſult or affront was offered, and are ſometimes in danger of harbouring the malice of enmity againſt thoſe, who though they might have wounded our pride, or inadvertently rouſed our anger, are notwithſtanding ready at all times to perform the duties of a neighbour, and the kind offices of a friend. Such indeed are the effects of an irafcible temper, that the deareſt bleſſings and moſt rational ſatisfactions this life

life can afford, are often loſt by it. The ties of friendſhip, the few pleaſures that reſult from our intercourſe with the world, and the endearing comforts of relationſhip, which are, at beſt, but of a frail and uncertain nature, are rendered doubly ſo to the man of a paſſionate and irritable diſpoſition: his friendſhips can be but few, and thoſe few will be of a doubtful and ſuſpicious kind. Such, poſſibly, as are formed from intereſted motives only, or ſuch as appear under the cold form of ceremony and diſtant reſpect. Men of independent minds, who are capable of forming, and maintaining ſuch connections with the good and virtuous, as are productive of the greateſt felicity, are not willing to ſubject themſelves to the capricious anger of a wild and uncultivated mind, and therefore turn from it with indifference, if not contempt. The beſt and happieſt of mortals find that vexations and diſappointments, ſorrows and calamities, are ſcattered, in ſufficient abundance, through the paths of life, without ſharing the pain and miſery, which ſpring

only from internal diſorder, miſgovernment and folly. But though we, as citizens of the world, may ſhrink from a man of this unhappy frame, wherever we meet him, or only keep up that ſort of formal and occaſional intercourſe with him, which is well enough adapted for carrying on the buſineſs of life, but which, by no means, implies the intimacy or confidence of friendſhip; yet thoſe whom nature has made his dependents, and others who are forced to mingle with him in the ſmall circle of domeſtic life, may well excite our pity. To the capricious rage and violence of ungoverned paſſions, in ſuperiors, many may aſcribe the ſum of their miſery. However careful they may be to diſcipline their own minds, and cultivate happineſs by prudent conduct and integrity of heart, they cannot live ſecure againſt the wild and unprovoked attacks of anger, or the petty vexations of peeviſhneſs.

FARTHER, thoſe who are contented to live under the looſe dominion of the paſſions, muſt

muſt be in conſtant fear of ſaying or doing ſomething to-day, which they may be truly aſhamed of to-morrow. Short experience will teach them, that in the evil moments of anger and reſentment, they have expoſed themſelves to deriſion and contempt, if not to infamy and diſgrace for ever. Sorrow and confuſion, ſhame and remorſe, will be the invariable conſequences of an iraſcible diſpoſition, in which all ſenſe of virtue is not yet extinct, and where this is not the caſe, we can expect to find nothing but confirmed habits of brutality; the fierceneſs of a ſavage, without his fondneſs, or inſtinctive affection.

But though pain and ſorrow are the natural effects of internal diſorder and miſrule, yet they are not the only evils which hourly threaten the man whoſe mind is ready, on every trivial occaſion, to burn with anger, and kindle into reſentment. He may juſtly apprehend more dreadful conſequences. He is in danger of every ſpecies of injuſtice, and every degree of guilt.

The tempter to evil is cheriſhed within his own breaſt. While men in general are only expoſed to caſual temptation and eventual evil, the paſſionate man cannot mix in ſociety without being in danger every hour. And if we may juſtly eſtimate the turpitude of any vice, or evil propenſity, from its effects, we muſt aſcribe a large portion of guilt to the unlimited indulgence of anger: for let us conſider it in its conſequences, and the hiſtory of the world will inform us, that it has not only been productive of miſery and wretchedneſs, but has often incurred the puniſhment of the law, for acts of violence and oppreſſion, and frequently led to the foul crimes of treaſon, rebellion, and even murder. While theſe obſervations may be applied to all ages and conditions of life, let it be remembered, that every paſſion derives additional force from the ardor of youth; and that the warmth of temper, which is ſo common at this early period of life, and which often proves the ſource of anger and reſentment, if not timely corrected and tem-

tempered, by the mild and ſeaſonable influence of religious principles, will probably, in old age, ſettle into gloomy malignity, or ſplenetic and habitual rage; diſpoſitions that muſt corrupt the ſource of every virtue, and render our ſervices to God unacceptable and vain. This leads me to conſider, that iraſcibility of temper, and peeviſhneſs of diſpoſition, which I have made the ſubject of our preſent meditation, in the laſt and moſt important point of view; as incompatible with the duties of a Chriſtian, and that frame of mind which our bleſſed Redeemer taught us to cultivate.

The birth of our heavenly Lord was celebrated by the Song of Angels, who announced "peace on earth, good-will "towards man;" and, on the eve of his departure from a wicked and degenerate world, this was part of the laſt and affectionate bleſſing which he beſtowed on his few faithful followers—"Peace I leave "with you, my peace I give unto you."

This was that peace which paſſeth all underſtanding, which calms the violence of every unruly paſſion, and ſupports the ſoul under every calamity; which raiſes us above the ſorrows and misfortunes of this life, by directing the attention of our minds to proſpects of glory and immortality. The diſciple of Chriſt, therefore, inſtead of being eagerly engaged in the things of this world, or deeply intereſted in the various conflicts of human paſſions, prejudices and follies, boaſts chiefly in the comforts of a meek and quiet ſpirit, and thoſe calm, but ſuperior ſatisfactions, which ſpring from the duties of piety, and a ſteady confidence in the mercy and goodneſs of God. Next to this bleſſed diſpoſition, which may well be regarded as the good ground in which the ſeed of every virtue will grow up to maturity and perfection, our heavenly Lord requires of us works of charity and neighbourly love, mutual forbearance, long-ſuffering, and ſteady perſeverance in the courſe of every duty. Conſider, therefore, whether he whoſe heart is actuated by

by the wild impulſes of paſſion, and whoſe temper has never been ſubmitted to the guidance of reaſon, or the diſcipline of religion, can ever fulfil the ſacred obligations of a chriſtian, or duly perform the duties which his Redeemer has enjoined? Can he lay claim to the merit of having loved his neighbour, with conſtancy and truth, who is ready, on every occaſion, to treat him with capricious rage, or unmerited ſeverity? Can he boaſt of having fulfilled the Apoſtle's precept, which directs us to live, as much as it is poſſible, peaceably with all men, who daily interrupts the comforts that ſhould reſult from the moſt endearing relations of life, with the idle miſeries of a fretful, peeviſh temper? Surely not. Nor can he plead, before the eternal judge, or even to his own conſcience, that he has performed the pleaſing duties of a fond parent, an affectionate huſband, or a faithful friend, who, for want of cultivating peace within his own boſom, has often cauſed the tear of ſorrow, inſtead of wiping it away, and multiplied the calamities

of life to thoſe who were moſt dear to him, and who would otherwiſe have "gone on "their way rejoicing."

EVEN the efficacy of piety and prayer muſt be deſtroyed by ſuch evil diſpoſitions. It is not a caſual fit of devotion that renders us accepted of the Father. We muſt cultivate habits of religion as well as of virtue. We muſt vanquiſh the luſts of the fleſh, and earneſtly ſtrive after the fruits of the Spirit. No "prayers or alms "can go up for a memorial before God," from one who has never learned to "rule his "ſpirit," and out of whoſe heart proceedeth ſupplication for pardon one moment, and perhaps "confuſion and every evil "work the next." Your innocence and peace, your virtue, your happineſs here, and your acceptance with the Almighty Father hereafter, depend, therefore, in a great meaſure, on the cultivation of that gentle and complacent temper, which is the diſtinguiſhing ornament of a chriſtian,

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and the chief ſource of happineſs to ourſelves and others.

MANY will delude themſelves ſo far as to believe, that the temper is not an object of cultivation; that it is merely conſtitutional, and that we are no more accountable for it, than for the particular formation and proportion of our bodies. But this is one of the vain ſubterfuges of ſelf-love; and every one that uſes it knows it to be falſe, whenever he examines his own heart. Were not the temper, the paſſions and propenſities of the mind proper objects of diſcipline and improvement, there would be an end of all merit and virtue, nor could we be, in the eye of reaſon, or of nature, accountable creatures any longer. But aſk the moſt violent and irritable man, one who has taken no care to govern his mind from motives of duty, whether he has not often checked the emotions of anger and reſentment, from a regard to time, place and circumſtances? Let him tell you, whether he has not had "reſpect of per-

" ſons," and whether he has not often governed his tongue, from motives of intereſt and fear, or from the counteraction of ſome other paſſion. If ſuch unworthy motives have been known to regulate his conduct, and check the violent impulſes of nature, ſurely that man becomes highly guilty, if he ſuffers not cauſes of a more exalted nature to produce the ſame effects; ſuch are a regard to our own happineſs, and the peace of thoſe with whom we live, the love of man, and the favor of God.

It is true, that nature has caſt us in different moulds. Some minds require a greater ſhare of cultivation than others; but God knows the nature and value of the talent which he has entruſted to our care, and the opportunities we have had of improving it. He will prove a kind and merciful judge, nor will he require of us more than we are able to perform. In fighting the good fight of faith, and preſſing on towards the glorious prize of immortality, only let us exert all our powers.

And

And that neither our underſtandings may be blinded by the miſrepreſentations of ſelf-love, nor our conſciences "hardened "through the deceitfulneſs of ſin," let us always remember that we live and act under the eye of omniſcience. The frailties of human nature muſt ſometimes prevail, and there may be unguarded moments in which our hearts will be overpowered by the violent aſſaults of paſſion: But theſe are infirmities on which, it is hoped, our Almighty Father will look with mercy, ſince only habit and indulgence can make them ſinful. Yet we muſt remember, it is only on great and uncommon occaſions, that we have reaſon to entertain this pleaſing expectation. The holy Apoſtle Peter, in a moment of generous indignation, at the cruel treatment of his bleſſed Lord, forgot the dignity of his profeſſion, and ſmote the ſervant of the High Prieſt with the ſword. On ſuch an occaſion, and under ſuch circumſtances, the action was paſſed over with a gentle, but poſitive reproof; and the precept, "Be ye angry, and ſin

"not,"

" not," makes due allowance for the weakneſs of human nature, and at the ſame time applies to the conſcience as the law of God. After every arduous endeavour, we are fully aſſured, that we muſt reſt far ſhort of perfection, and ought to conſider ourſelves as " unprofitable ſervants;" but yet we may derive ſome comfort from the abundant ſource of our Redeemer's love, and the bleſſed truth, that he who made us, " knoweth our frame, and remember-" eth that we are duſt."

SER-

# SERMON XV.

LUKE iv. 32.

——*His word was with power.*

OUR Lord, having made his eſcape from the Jews of Nazareth, who ſought to deſtroy him, in the beginning of his divine miniſtry, went to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and "taught the people "on the ſabbath-days." Such was the effect of his preaching here, that they were aſtoniſhed at his doctrine; for, adds the holy evangeliſt, in the plain, unaffected ſtyle of the goſpel, "his word was with "power." Previous to his coming into the world, indeed, the Jews were taught, by

by an illuſtrious ſeries of prophecies, to believe, that a divine energy would diſtinguiſh the words and actions of the Meſſiah. Yet they were weak enough to expect a mere temporal prince, one that was to eclipſe the glory of David, and deliver them from the dominion of the Romans. But when "the winds and ſeas obeyed him; when "they ſaw the dead raiſed to life, the blind "recover their ſight, and the lame man leap "as an hart," all might have known, that theſe were the works which beſt correſponded with the office of the Meſſiah, and the benevolent diſpenſations of providence in ſending a Saviour upon earth. He whom the prophet ſtiled "The everlaſting "Father, the Prince of Peace," was not to ſpread ſlaughter and devaſtation among mankind, like the ambitious princes of this world, under the vain pretence of glory and of conqueſt; but to eſtabliſh a ſpiritual kingdom, a kingdom of peace, of righteouſneſs and true holineſs. It was his ſuperior glory "to preach good tidings to the "meek, to bind up the broken-hearted,

"and

" and to proclaim the acceptable year of " the Lord." Yes, it was the object of his divine miniſtry " to give unto his peo- " ple the knowledge of ſalvation, to afford " light to them that ſit in darkneſs and in " the ſhadow of death, and to guide our " feet into the way of peace."

As the only begotten Son of the Father he was inveſted, we are told, with all power both in heaven and in earth, and exalted far above the angels. Nothing leſs than the exertion of this divine power, in performing miracles and wonders, was neceſſary to ſubdue the prejudices, and enlighten the ignorance of a degenerate world. At this diſtance of time, we can only adore, without hoping to imitate, the mighty works which diſtinguiſhed the miniſtry of our Lord, and which he performed, at once to manifeſt his love to man, and to afford the moſt unexceptionable grounds of faith in his kingdom. But though theſe miraculous proofs of his divinity have ceaſed, and that, we may ſuppoſe, becauſe divine wiſdom

dom ſaw there was no longer neceſſity for them; yet there were other cauſes, very ſufficient of themſelves to make the people wonder at his doctrine, and to convince the whole world that "his word was with "power." As theſe cauſes proceeded from perfections of character which we ourſelves as chriſtians are required to imitate, we cannot make them too often the ſubject of our meditations, eſpecially in thoſe hours which are ſet apart for the diſcharge of devotional duties.

I SHALL endeavour to ſhew, therefore, that the word of our bleſſed Lord was always attended with power. I. From the truth and diſintereſtedneſs of his doctrines, and the ſuperior excellence of his ſentiments. II. From the gracious manner in which thoſe ſentiments were delivered. III. From the openneſs and ſincerity of his reproof; and IV. From his example.

BEFORE the chriſtian æra, the whole world was given to the groſſeſt idolatry. Even

Even the Jews, who were taught the knowledge of the one true God, and at leaſt the firſt rudiments of revelation, by Moſes and the prophets, did not long remain uncontaminated by the example of their neighbours. Every one embraced the errors and ſuperſtitions of the country in which he lived, without ever giving himſelf the trouble of enquiring whether his religion was worthy of a rational being or not, and without conſidering whether he "worſhipped the Father in ſpirit and in truth." Their devotion was ſeldom attended with any ſentiment that connected the reverence of the Deity with the mild duties of humanity, and as they were but little intereſted in the practice of their reſpective ſyſtems, from motives of conſcience, they were but little concerned either for their purity or ſucceſs. The warrior, indeed, was ever ready to proſtrate himſelf before the altars of his tutelary gods when he hoped for victory, or when he wiſhed to animate the courage of his troops, by infuſing into their minds the rage of religious

gious enthuſiaſm: and the diſpenſations of providence were vainly attempted to be diſcovered by unneceſſary, and, oftentimes, cruel ſacrifices. While the various nations of the earth were thus immerſed in ignorance and barbariſm, as far as related to divine worſhip, and "were," as St. Paul obſerves, "without God in the world;" it was of the higheſt importance, and well worthy of the office of our bleſſed Redeemer, to publiſh to the world a more perfect knowledge of that Supreme Being, whoſe wiſdom and whoſe power pervade all nature, and whom mankind had hitherto but "ignorantly worſhipped." Before "the day-ſpring from on high viſited us," there muſt have been always ſomething wanting to intereſt the heart and ſatisfy the mind. Far from engaging with an earneſt, but charitable zeal, in the propagation of their favorite polytheiſm, the Gentiles ſeem to have regarded religion only as a political engine, calculated to actuate or awe the common people, and from a total indifference, not a ſpirit of toleration, affected to believe, or, at

at leaſt, admitted, that the various and contending ſyſtems of ſurrounding nations were alſo of divine authority and ſacred obligation.

To enlighten the human mind, therefore, on this grand ſubject, to create an intereſt in the heart for the duties of piety, and, at the ſame time, to lay the foundation of a rational faith, were ſome of the many important objects of our Lord's miſſion.

The will of the Deity with regard to his intelligent creatures, the ſoul's immortality and a future judgment, the diſpenſation of providence, as far as it related to the happineſs or miſery of ſpirits in a ſeparate ſtate, the means by which human infirmity was to be aſſiſted, and the Almighty approached, with humble confidence, after repeated tranſgreſſions, were doctrines, ſome of which the poets, indeed, had embelliſhed with pleaſing fictions, but which no being, merely human, could ever teach with ſufficient authority. All reſted on the un-

certain ground of ſpeculation only. One ſect was ever ready, from motives of philoſophical vanity, to controvert the opinions of another, but the moſt virtuous as well as the wiſeſt of their ſages, ſeems to have confeſſed, that divine aſſiſtance was neceſſary to teach men divine truth. From the revelation, therefore, of theſe and other doctrines, ſo agreeable to the general ſenſe of mankind, ſo adapted to their wants, and at the ſame time ſo highly worthy of the Supreme Being, the word of our Lord, every other conſideration apart, muſt neceſſarily "have been with power."

It derived a further degree of power from the ſincere and diſintereſted manner in which the holy goſpel was taught. Mankind ſaw now, for the firſt time, a ſyſtem of divine worſhip inculcated that was wholly unconnected with the policy of the world, and in no wiſe calculated to promote the grandeur, or foſter the ambition of princes. The precepts alſo which our bleſſed Redeemer delivered for the inſtruction

ſtruction of his diſciples were, of themſelves, ſufficient to claim the wonder and admiration of all mankind. Before he condeſcended "to take up his abode and dwell "among us," the world was ignorant of the moſt amiable virtues that adorn the human character. The principle of univerſal charity and benevolence, which the goſpel ſo ſtrongly inculcates, was, perhaps, as a duty, utterly unknown, or, at leaſt, left unpractiſed. Inſtead of meekneſs and forbearance, long-ſuffering and humility, we might diſcover in the theory and practice of heathen nations, a fierce and intolerant ſpirit of pride, that blended itſelf with every principle, and ruled more or leſs in almoſt every action. It is true, we may collect a few feeble rays of that glorious light, which ſhines with ſo much luſtre throughout the goſpel, from the writings of ſome of the ancients. Here and there, we might diſcover a ſomething like the gentleneſs of chriſtian morality; but theſe were a few ſpeculative ideas originally borrowed from revelation, perhaps,

and which ſerved only to amuſe the imagination of the philoſopher, without having any influence in the general concerns of life.

FARTHER, the ſyſtem of holineſs, which our Lord and Saviour taught, did not conſiſt of maxims that were formed in ſolitude by ſtudy and contemplation. The bleſſed truths which he delivered, were the unpremeditated effuſions of that divine wiſdom, which was, at all times, ſufficient to correct the ignorance, and aſſiſt the frailty of human beings. At the requeſt of his diſciples, he taught them, inſtantly, to addreſs their heavenly Father in a form of prayer, ſo beautiful in its compoſition, ſo truly ſublime in its expreſſions, and ſo comprehenſive in its petitions, that the human mind cannot conceive any thing more perfect, or ſo well adapted to the wants of man, as he ſtands in relation to his Maker. He, therefore, was the living teacher of the world. He did not confine his doctrines to a particular ſect, or ſchool, into which his diſciples were to be formally initiated,

initiated, nor even to a choſen people; but went about, from place to place, ſometimes teaching, to "all that had ears to hear," truths that had never yet been fully revealed, and ſometimes explaining thoſe duties, in their full force, which had been "rendered of no effect," by the traditions of the Phariſees, or by the corruptions of the prieſts and rulers.

FROM the openneſs of his manner, and the freedom with which he addreſſed the multitudes that thronged to hear him, the Jews hoped to entangle him in ſome contradictions, or bewilder him with their ſubtilties; but ſuch was his ſuperior wiſdom, that they were always repulſed with mortification and diſgrace. Inſtances of this frequently occur in the holy goſpel. The caſe of the woman who had ſeven huſbands, propoſed to him by the Sadducees, the inſidious enquiry about the tribute-money, and the replies which he made the Phariſees, when they accuſed him of violating the ſabbath, and reproached

him for aſſociating with publicans and ſinners, are well known. On theſe, and ſimilar occaſions, he amply fulfilled the precept, which he afterwards gave his diſciples, and, to "the wiſdom of the ſerpent," always united "the innocence of the dove." But the caſe of the lawyer, who "ſtood up "and tempted him," to uſe the expreſſion of the evangeliſt, deſerves particular conſideration. This man, we might ſuppoſe, from his profeſſion and his conduct, was well-verſed in the Moſaic law, and the books of the Talmud alſo. When, therefore, he aſked "what he ſhould do to in-"herit eternal life," our Lord, with great propriety, enquired of him, "what was "written in the law—how readeſt thou?" continued he. The lawyer, that he might by no means appear deficient in his profeſſion, recited, with great accuracy, his duty towards God, and his duty towards his neighbour. He was told, by our Lord, with that plainneſs and ſimplicity which diſtinguiſhed all his words, that he had anſwered right; "this do," continued he,

"and

"and thou ſhalt live." Here, one might ſuppoſe, the converſation would have ended; but he, with all the ſubtilty and chicanery of a ſcribe, proceeded, by aſking, "who is my neighbour?" This ſeems to have been a poor attempt to embarraſs the Saviour of the world, and "a teacher that was come from God," by requiring of him a nice and logical diſtinction between a real and ſuppoſed neighbour. A queſtion of this nature might, indeed, have embarraſſed a mere worldly maſter, or given riſe to ſome obvious and common reply. But ſo far was it from diſconcerting our bleſſed Lord, that he uttered, on the occaſion, a parable ſo beautiful and perfect in all its parts, and ſo wonderfully adapted to ſatisfy the curioſity, and ſilence the preſumption of the arrogant ſcribe, that we can never ſufficiently admire its excellence, or reverence its precepts. But, as I have already made this the ſubject of a preceding diſcourſe, it will not be neceſſary to enlarge any farther on it here. Let me only obſerve, that were we to examine every pa-

rable in the New Teſtament, we ſhould find that they were all delivered in the ſame unpremeditated manner, and for the purpoſe of enforcing ſome important truth or doctrine.

It is obſervable, alſo, that our Lord and Redeemer omitted no opportunity of enlivening his inſtructions, and rendering his preaching more effectual, by ſelecting the moſt ſtriking and familiar images from nature, that were preſented to his notice. When he was led, in his heavenly ſermon on the Mount, to warn his followers againſt any diſtruſt of the divine providence, and wiſhed them to ſuppreſs all anxiety for the mere "pomps and vanities of life," he directed their attention to "the fowls of the "air," that were ſinging around them, perhaps, and "the lilies of the field" that were then in full bloom. When the harveſt approached, he admoniſhed his diſciples of the ſpiritual harveſt. When in the fertile and favorite mount of olives, which abounded with vines, he ſpoke in metaphor, with

with peculiar force and beauty, of the huſbandmen, the vine and branches. On the ſolemn feaſt of tabernacles, when the Jews, according to cuſtom, brought a great quantity of water into the temple from the river Shiloah, our Lord ſtood and cried, "if "any man thirſt, let him come unto me, "and drink." The day after, alluding to the manumiſſion of the ſervants on account of the ſabbatical year, he ſaid, "if ye con-"tinue in my word, the truth ſhall make "you free." So replete, indeed, was his converſation with lively imagery and ſtriking alluſions, that the evangeliſt, with ſome reaſon, ſays, "without a parable "ſpake he not unto them." Thus, was "his word with power," and thus it might well be obſerved, that "he taught men as "one having authority, and not as the "ſcribes."

In proceeding with the ſubject under our preſent contemplation, it might be neceſſary to remark, that mankind had long been ſeparated by vile diſtinctions. The two

two rival and predominant ſects in Judea were the Phariſees and Sadducees. The former paid little attention to inward purity and practical holineſs, but were ſatisfied with a pompous and oſtentatious performance of the mere ceremonies of religion, and a blind, but ardent zeal for the idle traditions of the elders. The latter, who believed not in a future ſtate of exiſtence, but thought that the rewards and puniſhments of divine juſtice were confined to this world, might have been truly ſaid, in the beautiful language of ſcripture, to ſit, as yet, "in darkneſs, and in the region "and ſhadow of death." Each regarded his neighbour with a degree of hoſtile and intolerant pride, while religion, inſtead of uniting mankind in the bands of ſocial union, ſerved only to keep them at variance, by ſowing the ſeeds of animoſity and malevolence. To the common people, and to thoſe whoſe minds were not heated by the zeal of angry and contending ſectaries, the bleſſings of divine revelation could not be extended. The poor, who were forced

to

to " earn their bread by the ſweat of their " brow," had neither time nor ability to join the Phariſees in their idle oſtentation and expenſive offerings; and as for the Sadducees, they profeſſed no ſentiments of piety that could firmly attach the heart to the worſhip of God, or the love of man, nor held any articles of belief, on which the ſoul could rely with confidence. But men were now told, by the ſame authority which " brought life and immor- " tality to light," that God is no reſpecter of perſons; but that " in every nation he " that feareth him and worketh righteouſ- " neſs, is accepted with him." A religion was now publiſhed, in the fulneſs of time, whoſe obligations extended to the whole world. The rich and poor were equally capable of fulfilling its laws, and growing wiſe unto ſalvation; or, if there were any advantage, it was in favor of the latter. Thoſe whom the world was moſt ready to perſecute and diſtreſs, or treat with inſolence and overbearing pride, were now pronounced to be bleſſed. Such were " the

" meek,

" meek, the poor in ſpirit, and they that " mourn." Well, therefore, might " all " men ſeek for the author of theſe bleſſed " truths," and, more eſpecially, might the common people " wonder at the gra- " cious words which proceeded out of " his mouth."

But farther, the word of our Lord was attended with power, from the gracious manner in which all his doctrines were delivered. The moſt diſtinguiſhing characteriſtics of his preaching were a meekneſs and gentleneſs, blended with a ſincerity of affection, that was truly divine. As an inſtance of this we need only remember his ſhort addreſs to the multitudes that came to ſee and hear him. " Come unto " me all ye that labor, and are heavy " laden, and I will give you reſt. Take " my yoke upon you, and learn of me; " for I am meek and lowly in heart, and " ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls." When ſuch a gracious invitation to duty was held out to all mankind, who could

forbear

forbear contraſting it with the ſpiritual pride of the Phariſees, and who could refrain from "hearing it with joy?" In his divine miniſtry, there was none of the moroſeneſs of philoſophy, nor any of that myſterious pomp of ſcience which ſhrunk from the obſervation of the world. Men were taught the ſublimeſt truths and moſt important doctrines, by one who mingled with all ranks of people, on terms of perfect familiarity; who reſolved their doubts, corrected their errors, and helped their infirmities. But in this wonderful condeſcenſion and great humility, the heavenly Meſſiah loſt none of the dignity or ſplendor of his character. In his humility there was nothing to be ſeen of the mean compliances of a baſe or worldly mind; and in his charity and forbearance, there was none of that affected candor and canting liberality, which are too often the flimſy diſguiſes of hypocriſy, or the ſpecious pretexts of ſhameful indifference. He had no reſpect of perſons; but, as occaſion required, freely rebuked, or kindly admoniſhed,

niſhed, men in the moſt exalted ſtations, as well as thoſe of lower degree. He was ſeldom provoked to ſeverity, indeed, except when the hypocriſy of the Phariſees, or the corruption of the ſcribes came under his notice; and it may be confidently ſaid, that he never wounded, but with a view to heal. Such was the wonderful effect of his miniſtry, that individuals of the moſt diſcordant principles and jarring intereſts united in their reverence and admiration of this "Prince of Peace." Among theſe were publicans and Phariſees, Centurions and Samaritans. Such was the veneration, or eager curioſity of Zaccheus, we find, that "he ran before and climbed up into a ſy-"camore-tree, to ſee our Lord paſs by."

INDEPENDENT of the cauſes which have been already enumerated to ſhew that "his "word was with power," we know not what perſonal and more endearing graces diſtinguiſhed his manner and converſation. We can only imagine that rays of divine glory beamed from his eyes, that there was

was ſomething more than mortal in the accents of his voice, and that, in all his actions, there was a dignity that ſurpaſſes the conception of the human mind. There are a few circumſtances in the goſpel-hiſtory, which render this probable, at leaſt, if not certain. When Peter had denied his Saviour, and the cock crew, as had been foretold, St. Luke ſays that our Lord "turned and looked upon him." There was a ſomething in this look, better to be imagined than deſcribed, which, added to the conſciouſneſs of his infidelity and falſhood, pierced the aged and penitent apoſtle to the heart. He could no longer endure the preſence of his divine Maſter, but "went out and wept bitterly." When the ſoldiers, alſo, were ſent to apprehend him, though they were ſeldom withheld from executing any commiſſion, however bloody, from ſentiments of humanity, yet they returned, awed with reverence by his manner and converſation, alledging for their excuſe, that "never man ſpake like "this man." When he joined the two

diſciples, as they journeyed to Emmaus, and entered into converſation with them, "they ſaid one to another," after he had left them, "did not our heart burn within "us, while he talked with us by the way, "and while he opened to us the ſcrip-"tures?" He himſelf alſo obſerved to his diſciples, "bleſſed are the eyes which ſee "the things that ye ſee!" Bleſſed, indeed! What devout chriſtian is there who does not indulge the fond, but ineffectual wiſh, that he could have ſeen him perform ſome of his miracles of love, heard him pronounce his divine ſermon on the Mount, or ſat down with him and his beloved diſciples, eaten of the bread which he brake, and drunk of the cup which he bleſſed!

We come now to ſhew that our Lord's word was rendered powerful alſo, from the openneſs and ſincerity of his reproof. He was not an occaſional teacher that exerciſed his function, at ſtated periods; but his whole life and converſation was a leſſon of inſtruction. When he retired to reſt,

when

when he walked through the fields, or when he ſat down at meat with Phariſees, publicans and ſinners, he always aſſumed the office, and uſed the authority of the Meſſiah. No regard to time or place could render him indifferent to errors of conduct, or violation of duty. When invited to the entertainments of the chief Phariſees, which often happened, he always endeavoured to correct their haughtineſs and pride, their want of charity to others, and their blind attachment to their own cuſtoms, and withdrew their attention from outward cleanlineſs and exterior obſervances, to inward purity and ſanctity of heart.

But, laſtly, the word of our Lord was with power from his example. It is this which muſt give vigor and effect to all precept. It avails but little for a teacher to inſtruct others in what he cannot, or will not practiſe himſelf. Had the Saviour of the world ſtood up to comfort the wretched and heal the broken-hearted, when he himſelf was perfectly at eaſe, he

would not have ſucceeded much better than many other worldly teachers. But when joy, conſolation, and bleſſedneſs were pronounced on the perſecuted and the poor, by one, who "had not himſelf where to lay "his head," who could hear him with indifference, or what heart could refuſe the balm of comfort? Throughout his whole miniſtry, his example ſanctified his precepts; and when men were inſtructed by one who fulfilled every duty which he inculcated, and experienced every affliction which he endeavoured to aſſuage, they muſt needs "have been taught by authority."

In contemplating, therefore, the wonderful effects of our Lord's word, as manifeſted in the goſpel, let us adore him in his divine capacity, as the Saviour of the world and the bleſſed mediator for human frailty between God and man; and, in his human capacity, as the heavenly teacher and reformer of the world, let us ſtudy with grateful adoration to follow his bleſſed example.

example. It is true, we can only regard the miracles and wonders of his power, with love and reverence; but we can, and are required, to imitate his charity, his truth, his reſignation to the divine will, his unwearied benevolence, his meekneſs, his gentleneſs, and great humility.

# SERMON XVI.

ISAIAH liii. 3.

*He is deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows and acquainted with grief.*

ONE of the ſtrongeſt arguments in favor of chriſtianity is the wonderful accompliſhment of the prophecies in the perſon of our bleſſed Saviour. The place of his birth, the manner of his life and death, his miracles, and the virtues for which he was to be famous, are foretold in the moſt circumſtantial manner. And ſo particularly are his ſufferings and calamities deſcribed in the admirable chap-

ter from which I have taken my text, that one of the moſt profligate and abandoned infidels that ever diſgraced religion or morality, was converted by reading it, and (as a learned and pious divine informs us) continued ever after a penitent and ſincere chriſtian. But a quotation or two from the ſcripture itſelf will give more authority to this argument than any thing elſe. "Search the ſcriptures (ſays our "bleſſed Lord) for in them ye think ye "have eternal life, and they are they which "teſtify of me." You may remember, too, when St. Paul was arraigned before the King of the Jews for preaching the doctrines of the goſpel, after having related his miraculous converſion, he appealed to the authority of the prophets to eſtabliſh the truth of that bleſſed ſyſtem which he had ſo zealouſly eſpouſed. "King Agrip-"pa," ſaid the venerable apoſtle, "be-"lieveſt thou the prophets? I know that "thou believeſt." What was the effect produced on his mind by this queſtion? Why, ſo forcibly did the agreement of

prophecy

prophecy with the circumſtances of our bleſſed Lord's life and death ſtrike him, that he anſwered in confuſion, "Almoſt "thou perſuadeſt me to be a chriſtian."

I SHALL on the preſent occaſion, therefore, firſt ſhew you a full completion of the words in the text, I truſt, and other prophecies that relate to the ſufferings of the Meſſiah, by giving you a ſhort view of his calamitous hiſtory; and ſhall endeavour to ſtrengthen the general argument by adverting to the prophets occaſionally as we proceed. I ſhall then attempt to explain ſome of the many advantages which the doctrines of the holy goſpel derive from the ſufferings of its divine Author and his primitive apoſtles.

IF we wiſh to trace his ſorrows to their ſource, we muſt go back as far as the hour of his birth. Indeed, there was nothing but proſpects of miſery for him even before he was born. Auguſtus Cæſar, it ſeems, in thoſe days, iſſued out a decree

that all the world ſhould be taxed, that is, that all his ſubjects ſhould regiſter their names in a public manner, to gratify his vanity and ambition who wiſhed to know their exact number. For this purpoſe, all were ordered to go, every one to his own city. It was then, too, that Joſeph, with Mary his eſpouſed wife, went up to their own city, as far as from Nazareth to Bethlehem. During the ſickly and painful time of child-bearing, ſhe was forced to undertake this long, laborious journey; and though we are not informed of the particular circumſtances which attended it, yet we may very reaſonably ſuppoſe, that, on account of her poverty, and more, from the peculiar diſtreſs of her ſituation, ſhe was but ill provided for ſuch an expedition. We know not what misfortunes ſhe had to ſtruggle with. Poor and friendleſs, perhaps, ſhe could not purchaſe neceſſary comfort and refreſhment. We are the more readily led to ſuppoſe this was the caſe, when we call to mind the hardſhip and calamity that attended her, after ſhe and

her huſband had reached the end of their journey. "When the days were accom-"pliſhed that ſhe ſhould be delivered," when "the great pain and peril of child-"birth came upon her," at ſuch a time and in ſuch a place, though her diſtreſſes might have claimed protection, and the anguiſh of her mind commanded pity, yet, we find, "there was no room for them in "the inn," ſo, without the comforts which the moſt abject wretch commonly enjoys, "ſhe brought forth her firſt-born ſon, "and wrapped him in ſwaddling clothes, "and laid him in a manger." Thus did he enter the world in the moſt miſerable ſtate of poverty, and was "acquainted "with grief," even from his birth.

No ſooner was he born than new ſcenes of miſery, new proſpects of calamity, opened before him. Herod, having heard that a King of the Jews was born, with unrelenting cruelty ſlew all the young children that were in, or near Bethlehem, under two years old. But before this barbarous event,

Joſeph

Joſeph was warned to flee with the young child and his mother into Egypt. Here was another laborious and diſtreſsful pilgrimage for them; they were to flee into a land of ſtrangers; innocent as they were, and free from all offence, they were forced to leave their kindred and their native city, and the bleſſed Jeſus began to ſuffer that perſecution in his infancy, which attended his whole miniſtry on earth, and which, at laſt, terminated in his agonies on the croſs. But on the death of Herod, they were recalled to Galilee, and then was fulfilled, as St. Matthew obſerves, that which was ſpoken of the Lord by the prophet, ſaying, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son."

It would be too extenſive for my preſent purpoſe to take notice of every circumſtance that relates to the calamities of our Lord, as they are connected with the prophecies in the Old Teſtament; I ſhall therefore paſs over the earlier part of his life, and proceed to conſider him in his public capacity; when he began to preach his holy

holy goſpel, and when the time was accompliſhed that he ſhould make himſelf manifeſt to the children of Iſrael. He was at this time, as we learn from from St. Luke, about thirty years of age; and he had not long taken upon him his divine office, before his miracles alone made it ſufficiently evident that he was the Son of God. He gave ſight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and thoſe who were dumb received the power of ſpeech. Beſides this he cured all manner of diſeaſes; the leproſy, the fever, the palſy, and the dropſy; and that, not by any human means, but by the bare touch of his hand alone, and ſometimes by a word of command. The lame too, and the maimed, the withered and the halt, were again reſtored and made perfectly whole. Here, we cannot but take notice of the exact and almoſt literal accompliſhment of that wonderful prophecy of Iſaiah, who had foretold that ſuch miracles ſhould be performed by the Meſſiah, in theſe very remarkable words. "Behold your God "will come and ſave you; then the eyes

"of

" of the blind ſhall be opened, and the " ears of the deaf ſhall be unſtopped; " then ſhall the lame man leap as an hart, " and the tongue of the dumb ſhall ſing." Theſe things, too, as the holy apoſtle ſays, " were not done in a corner," but in different parts of the Jewiſh nation, and frequently in the preſence of whole multitudes who could teſtify their truth. To crown theſe miracles of love, he raiſed three perſons from the dead; the ruler's daughter in the chamber, the widow's ſon in the ſtreet, and his friend Lazarus; who, when he called him from the grave, after he had been buried four days, " came forth," as St. John tells us, " bound hand and foot " with grave-clothes." But, notwithſtanding all this, and though, as the prophet had foretold, " he preached good " tidings to the meek, bound up the " broken-hearted, and proclaimed liberty " to the captive," yet we learn that his enemies grew more inveterate againſt him, and the unbounded love and kindneſs which he ſhewed to the whole world, only heaped

freſh

freſh ſorrows and calamities upon his own head! All his benevolence was miſconſtrued by the envy, malice and jealouſy of the prieſts and rulers of the people; and every artful, every mean and deſpicable ſubterfuge was uſed, to poiſon the minds of the ignorant, and to irritate the mob againſt him. If he freed poor wretches from the dominion of evil ſpirits, he was accuſed of being in league with the powers of darkneſs; if he healed their diſeaſes and pardoned their ſins, then he was charged with blaſphemy; not all the wonderful works that diſtinguiſhed his miniſtry, not the divinity of his preaching, the diſintereſtedneſs of his conduct, nor the ſanctity of his morals, could ſecure him from the rage of party, and the perſecutions of the obdurate Jews. To add to his afflictions, we read too, that while he was thus aſſiduouſly employed in the diſcharge of his divine office, he was ſo extremely poor, that "certain good women miniſtered to his "neceſſities out of their ſubſtance," and he himſelf has told us, that he had "not

"where

" where to lay his head," contraſting, at the ſame time, his wretched condition " with the foxes that have holes," as he obſerved, and " the birds of " the air that have neſts." Thus was " he deſpiſed and rejected of men, a " man of ſorrows, and acquainted with " grief."

As we purſue his melancholy hiſtory, we find his calamities ſtill increaſing, till they ended with his laſt ſufferings on the croſs. They were aggravated too with uncommon circumſtances. He was betrayed into the hands of his enemies by one of thoſe men whom he had choſen for his diſciples. In the trying hour of his affliction alſo, when his enemies " came " out againſt him as againſt a thief or " murderer, armed with ſwords and ſtaves," all forſook him and fled; all except Peter, who " followed afar off," ſays the holy evangeliſt, but who followed only to deny him. Thus, deſerted by his friends, he is delivered up into the hands of his blood-

thirſty

thirſty enemies, and dragged away to judgment, helpleſs, and forſaken! Here, as the prophet had foretold, "he was oppreſſed "and afflicted, yet he opened not his "mouth." Such was the rage and ſo violent were the outcries which his enemies had kindled againſt him, that no plea of innocence, no moderation could be liſtened to from the timid and irreſolute judge, but he was prevailed upon, againſt his own conſcience, to give him up to their mercileſs fury, though "he found no fault in "him," and, inſtead of the bleſſed Jeſus, releaſed a public felon. We all know what inſults and indignities he ſuffered from the baſeſt of mankind. It is not common, in the moſt barbarous nations, to aggravate the torments of a poor wretch while he is in the hands of the executioner. The moſt vindictive ſpirit, one would ſuppoſe, might be ſatisfied with the loſs of life, with life lingered out in agonies upon the croſs; but this was not the caſe with him. He was forced to endure preparatory torments; "though he had done no violence," and

though

though it had been the chief buſineſs of his life to teach men mercy, love and kindneſs! Yes, he was ſcourged with rods, buffetted and ſpit on; crowned with thorns in deriſion, and expoſed to all the mockery and rudeneſs of a pitileſs and ſenſeleſs rabble. His precious blood was not ſufficient to glut their malice and revenge, but his miſeries muſt ſtill be inſulted and increaſed, by the wantonneſs of every thoughtleſs and unfeeling ruffian, whoſe cruel malignity of heart no ſenſe of virtue could ſuppreſs, and no ſenſe of ſhame reſtrain. If we proceed a little further, we ſhall find him crucified between two common malefactors; and, to give the laſt perfection to his divine character, leaving the world with a prayer for his murderers. "Father," ſaid he, "forgive them, for they know not what "they do."

HAVING fully ſhewn, I truſt, that "he "was deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man "of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief," we come now to conſider the advantages which

which the doctrines of his holy goſpel, and we its profeſſors, derive from the ſufferings of its ever-ſacred author, and his primitive apoſtles.

THE miſeries they endured, and the cruelties to which they patiently ſubmitted, in order to eſtabliſh their ſyſtem of holineſs, afford us the ſtrongeſt poſſible argument of their ſincerity; and both their precepts and example derive a luſtre from this which they could not have done from any thing elſe. Every good man, while he reveres the innocence and integrity of their lives, muſt receive, with humble faith, the doctrines which they revealed, and the precepts which they delivered. The enemies of chriſtianity may vainly cavil, for what human knowledge is there that might not be perplexed with doubts? But I would aſk them, where ſhall we repoſe confidence if we cannot in the beſt of men? Men whoſe lives were devoted to the practice of meek and humble piety, and the unwearied exerciſe of every ſocial duty? Men who with

the moſt illuſtrious fortitude encountered dangers and diſtreſſes in every ſhape, and, at laſt, met the moſt cruel deaths unappalled, that they might vindicate their doctrines and eſtabliſh the truth of the goſpel on the firmeſt foundation. If ſuch men are not to be believed, whom are we to truſt, or where ſhall we ſeek for truth? Had they lived in affluence, indeed, while they deſpiſed riches, or, had they ſhrunk from danger, when they were oppoſed, perſecuted and deſtroyed by the powerful and the great, it is true, their holy ſyſtem could not have received that ſanction which their ſufferings have given it; but now, we may learn every virtue from it with the greateſt advantage, and in the utmoſt perfection.

If we wiſh, for inſtance, to acquire fortitude, the moſt neceſſary, perhaps, of all human virtues, where ſhall we find greater, and at the ſame time, more amiable examples, than among thoſe men, who with a reſolution, which no dangers or diſtreſſes

could conquer, oppoſed the ignorance and ſuperſtition of a guilty world, taught men their duty, and practiſed what they taught. Hear with what manly boldneſs Peter and John addreſſed the Jewiſh rulers, immediately after they had been freed from priſon, and commanded by them, "not to ſpeak "at all, nor teach in the name of Jeſus." When menaced by thoſe jealous perſecutors of truth, they were not to be frightened from their purpoſe by threats, nor awed into ſilence by power; but anſwered, in the language of conſcious innocence and heroic virtue, "whether it be right in the "ſight of God to hearken unto you, more "than unto God, judge ye."

AGAIN, where ſhall we find patience and humility taught in ſo heavenly a manner? Though harraſſed by every misfortune, perplexed with every difficulty, and threatened with every danger, they diſcovered the moſt placid contentment and chearful ſubmiſſion to the will of God. "Being reviled they reviled not again, but

" bleſſed thoſe who curſed them, and prayed " for them who deſpitefully uſed them." Strangers to the rancorous paſſions of malice, hatred and revenge, they went about doing good to all; and perfectly ſatisfied with the diſpenſations of providence themſelves, the buſineſs of their lives was to make others ſo. They bleſſed God, therefore, eating their frugal meal with thankfulneſs, and often retired to the ſhades of ſolitude, or their favorite mount, and ſung hymns of praiſe to their great Creator.

THE poor and unfortunate ſhould remember, that the Apoſtles of Chriſt were no idle ſpeculatiſts, who taught virtues which they did not practiſe, but men who confirmed their precepts by example. They did not, like ſome, preach againſt the ills of life and endeavor to reaſon away the force of ſorrow, while they themſelves were ſurrounded with affluence and honors, but, in the very depth of poverty, and under the greateſt misfortunes, taught men the dangers that waited on riches, and, " hav-

" ing food and raiment," inculcated contentment. It is an eaſy taſk, we know, for men favored by fortune, and unacquainted with diſtreſs, to lay down rules of conduct for others, and point out the road which leads from miſery to happineſs; but theſe meek and humble teachers diſcloſed the living ſources of comfort to their followers, while oppreſſed with the heavieſt calamities, and though they, of all men in the world, leaſt experienced what we call the bleſſings of providence, yet they beſt vindicated its goodneſs, its juſtice and its mercy.

LASTLY, if we wiſh to learn the love that is due to our neighbour, where ſhall we find it taught in ſo divine a manner, as in his example whoſe life was one continued ſcene of univerſal charity to all mankind, " though he was deſpiſed and rejected of " them," and whoſe death purchaſed the pardon and redemption of the world? Or in the practice of that little flock which ſurvived their heavenly maſter? To ſupport

the ſacred cauſe, and guard their brethren from danger and diſtreſs, as well as they could, they aſſociated together with one common intereſt, and depoſited every one his little ſtock in their common treaſury. Thus did they profit by their bleſſed Maſter's inſtructions, and were in the beginning of their miniſtry, "as wiſe as ſer-"pents, and as harmleſs as doves."

If ſuch proofs of ſincerity, ſuch examples of piety and virtue, will not excite men to the exerciſe of good works, and create in them "a ſtedfaſt and lively faith," may we not affirm, that "neither will they be "perſuaded, though one roſe from the "dead?" For, ſurely, every thing has been done that could be done, to inculcate the love of our neighbour and the worſhip of God. Our reaſon is addreſſed in the moſt powerful and engaging manner, and the moſt perfect examples are exhibited for our imitation and inſtruction. We are allured to the practice of virtue by the promiſe of reward, and we are deterred from

from vice by the threats of future puniſhment. We are awed by fear, we are cheared and encouraged by hope, and may learn for our comfort, under the preſſure of every calamity, that "the kingdom of "heaven is open to all believers." May we not exclaim then, with the holy apoſtle, "How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo "great ſalvation?" That we may not neglect it, but receive it with all due ſubmiſſion, thankfulneſs and praiſe, God, of his infinite mercy, grant, to whom, &c.

# SERMON XVII.

LUKE ii. 14.

*Glory to God in the higheſt and on earth peace; good-will towards men* *.

THE text is the glorious proclamation of the heavenly hoſt on the birth of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour. That grand and illuſtrious event was diſtinguiſhed with thoſe ſtrikingly ſolemn and awful circumſtances which were ſuitable to it. The wiſe men of the Eaſt, or the Magi, journeyed from their native country to Jeruſalem, warned by the appearance of

* Preached on Chriſtmas-day.

a ſtar

a ſtar in the ſkies, that the Saviour of the world was about to take up his abode with man. It was the miraculous light of heaven that directed their ſearch, and paſſed over their heads, "till it came and ſtood "over where the young child was," ſays St. Matthew. The circumſtances which St. Luke adds are inexpreſſibly grand, beautiful and ſublime. "And there were in "the ſame country ſhepherds abiding in "the field, keeping watch over their flock "by night. And lo, the angel of the "Lord came upon them, and the glory "of the Lord ſhone round about them, "and they were ſore afraid. And the "angel ſaid unto them, fear not, for, be-"hold, I bring you good tidings of great "joy, which ſhall be to all people; for "unto you is born this day, in the city "of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the "Lord. And ſuddenly there was with the "angel a multitude of the heavenly hoſt "praiſing God, and ſaying, Glory to God "in the higheſt, and on earth peace; "good-will towards men."

It is in commemoration of this great and glorious event that we are aſſembled together; and our time may be employed in a manner ſuitable to the ſolemn occaſion, if we conſider ſome of the many particulars, in which it may be truly ſaid, that the birth of our Lord was attended with the moſt diſtinguiſhing good-will to men.

First, it is to him that we owe the knowledge of the only true and living God. Some interceſſor, ſome being endowed with more than human intelligence, was neceſſary to bring us acquainted with the Almighty Father, and to reconcile our minds to the diſpenſations of his providence. Whatever notions the human mind might acquire of the divine nature, by the exerciſe of reaſon, they muſt reſt, after every anxious enquiry has been made, on the uncertain ground of ſpeculation only. The attributes and exiſtence of a being that is omnipotent and omniſcient, are ſo very remote, ſo totally different from thoſe ſubjects

jects which fall within the limits of the underſtanding, and thoſe objects which engroſs the attention of our lives, that few truths were to be collected from them, by the major part of mankind, that could have ſufficient certainty to form any ſteady principles of action, or ſufficient efficacy to ſubdue temptation and improve the heart. Accordingly religion, in the earlier ages of the world, inſtead of being a ſyſtem of holineſs and practical duty, was nothing but a collection of groſs and abſurd tenets, generally calculated to promote cruelty inſtead of love, or mercy among men. It was always ſubſervient to ambition, and ſometimes to tyranny. It was filled with fooliſh and fantaſtic terrors, and encumbered with unavailing ceremonies and oblations, partly to awe the ignorant multitude, or to keep them employed; and partly to foſter the more crafty and deſigning in pride, in luxury and idleneſs.

Such were the ſtriking and general features of religion before the light of revelation

lation dawned upon mankind. To remove theſe abuſes, and to clear away theſe clouds of error, was an office well ſuited to the character of the Son of God. The invariable experience of many revolving ages taught men the want and neceſſity of relying on ſomething that carried more authority with it, more weight and information than the mere ſpeculations of men. The mediation of the bleſſed Jeſus was neceſſary to diſcloſe the diſpenſations of heaven to us, as far as they relate to the occaſions of life, and to ſettle a ſyſtem of piety ſufficiently powerful to influence and engage "the counſels of the heart." He has accordingly, in his ever-ſacred goſpel, united the duty which we owe our Maker ſo intimately with the love that is due to man, and heightened both by the intermixture of ſuch affections as have moſt influence over the heart, that nothing can be conceived more perfect, or ſo well adapted to improve the condition of human nature, and to promote the glory of God.

THE doctrine of a future ſtate of exiſtence, alſo, that was to laſt for ever, and to be marked with happineſs or woe, a doctrine ſo awful in itſelf, and that had ſo long engaged the anxious hopes and fears of every thinking being, he has clearly ſtated and eſtabliſhed on the firmeſt foundation. Before his coming, it was enveloped in darkneſs, doubt and perplexity. With great propriety therefore is it aſſerted, that "life and immortality were brought "to light through the goſpel."

THESE are ſome of the particulars of that divine knowledge which our Lord propagated, and by which he diſcovered his "good-will towards men." If we take a ſhort view of chriſtian morality, and the many bleſſed effects which it has, or ought to have, on human conduct, we ſhall have further cauſe to acknowledge his tranſcendant love and goodneſs.

BY taking on him the form of man, he certainly became the better qualified to be the

the inſtructor of men. Beſides his wonderful condeſcenſion in ſuffering himſelf to be expoſed to the ſame temptations, the ſame hardſhips and calamities that are incident to the moſt abject of the human race, he has familiarized his divine nature to our underſtanding, and by theſe means kindled ſuch ſympathy and exalted affection in our boſom, as invigorates our piety, and inſpires a mixture of gratitude and love, of worſhip and adoration for our heavenly maſter not to be deſcribed.

The virtues which he has labored to eſtabliſh, and by which he has eminently ſhewn his good-will to men, are ſuch as principally tend to promote their intereſts here and hereafter; ſuch as are admirably calculated to cheriſh the gentle and humane affections, to check every unruly paſſion that tends to enmity or the diſorder of life, and to endear us to each other by the duties of juſtice, and the kind offices of charity. Before the times of chriſtianity, that forbearance and "quietneſs of ſpirit," on which

which ſo many perfections of character are founded, were almoſt, if not entirely, unknown in the world. A fierce vindictive ſpirit that immediately prompted the execution of vengeance for every trifling injury or inſult, was deemed meritorious; and he that could go, on every occaſion, and embrue his hands in the blood of his fellow-creatures, was ſignalized as a hero, and a man of courage. That patient fortitude which inſpires calmneſs and reſolution amid the tempeſtuous ſcenes of life, that ſerenity which attends the good man in affliction, and which, indeed, is derived from a higher ſource than the exertion of the mind, in a ſtate of nature, were virtues to which men had been utter ſtrangers.

Nor were the mild duties of meekneſs and humility better known or practiſed in the world. A ferocious pride, and the maintenance of a fierce and ſavage dignity, were paſſions that almoſt wholly ſhared the human heart. The ſoftening of the mind of man, by ſuppreſſing every deſire that tends

tends to the exerciſe of cruelty, or the commiſſion of injuries under pretence of puniſhing them, has been attended with the moſt beneficial effects. The ſpirit of chriſtianity introduced virtues into the world the beſt calculated, not only to prevent the growth of oppreſſion and every ſpecies of injury and malice, but to promote the beſt temper and diſpoſition of mind that human nature is capable of maintaining. Yet let it be remembered, that the laws and obligations of the holy goſpel are not merely negative, ſuch as ſerve only to prevent miſery and diſorder in ſociety without doing farther good: While the heart is reſtrained from the indulgence of paſſions that lead to acts of cruelty and violence, it is formed to habits of piety, and impreſſed with ſentiments of humanity.

But of all other virtues, before the chriſtian diſpenſation, mankind were moſt deficient, perhaps, in charity to one another. They ſeem to have had no idea of that extenſive benevolence which includes

the whole world within its bounds, which teaches us to look up to the Almighty, as our common Father, and to conſider him as the protector and upholder of all things. Theſe exalted notions of the Divine Nature, at once ſo pleaſing and flattering to the human mind, were ſeldom, or never entertained, but by a few men of a ſtudious and philoſophical character. For want of annexing this idea of paternity to the Supreme Being, the charity of the heathen world was of an illiberal and contracted nature. All the duties of life and every object of benevolence were confined within their own tribe, or the particular diſtrict of country in which they lived. They were always prompt and eager indeed to diffuſe the rancorous paſſions of the heart; though the amiable virtues were choked by ſelfiſhneſs, by pride, or a deſpicable ambition. Whenever the fire of reſentment was kindled, their neighbours immediately caught the flame; acts of violence and hoſtility were continually multiplied, and the world was filled with rapine, ſlaughter,

ter, and devaſtation. Thoſe who are but mere ſcioliſts in hiſtory, but particularly in that of the middle ages of Europe, during the feudal ſyſtem of government, and before the goſpel was underſtood, will readily admit the truth of theſe obſervations.

It was an office well worthy the divine miniſtry of him, at whoſe birth peace was proclaimed on earth, to check the rage of theſe fierce and diſorderly paſſions, and to form the temper of man to mildneſs, moderation, charity and love. That he has done it, both by precept and example, every one, who is in the leaſt acquainted with the holy goſpel, will fully acknowledge. Such views of the Divine Being, ſuch heavenly precepts for the foundation of piety and virtue, and ſuch examples to enforce the practice of them, no other ſyſtem ever preſented. Whether we have, to the utmoſt of our power, profited by theſe divine bleſſings, is another conſideration. I have only inſiſted on what the goſpel teaches, not what mankind purſue.

Though I am far from entertaining the gloomy idea that the world is in a degenerate ſtate; I am, indeed, convinced that we are in a ſtate of improvement, and that the progreſs of virtue has been very conſiderable among ourſelves, ſince we have renounced the authority of that infamous and proſtituted church, which has ſo degraded the dignity of chriſtianity, and diſtorted its doctrines. The many comfortable aſylums that have been erected, and are voluntarily maintained for the wretched of every deſcription, will remain as monuments of our charity and public beneficence, to the lateſt period of time. And though it is, in ſome meaſure, too true, that vice almoſt of every kind abounds among us, yet let us hope, that we are gradually "preſſing on," as the holy apoſtle ſays, "towards the mark," and making our lives more conformable to the law of Chriſt. Let us hope that the odious vices of oppreſſion, cruelty and injuſtice, together with the gloomy paſſions of malice, hatred and revenge, are vaniſhing away, before

before the glorious light of the goſpel, and that their correſponding virtues and graces are, like the riſing morn, dawning on us with increaſing luſtre.

THUS have I endeavoured, as a ſubject proper for our conſideration, at this ſolemn ſeaſon, to ſhew you how the birth of our Lord was attended with good-will to man. To cloſe our meditations on the ſubject, I ſhall, as briefly as poſſible, ſtate to you what appears to me the proper diſpoſition of mind to be indulged, and the chief duties that ought to be performed, in celebrating this our great feſtival. With you, who have ſtedfaſtly embraced the goſpel of Chriſt, no argument will be neceſſary to ſhew that the higheſt degree of thankſgiving and praiſe, enlivened by the moſt exalted love and adoration, is both neceſſary, and, indeed, natural to the mind of man, on ſo great and illuſtrious an occaſion. But it is not ſufficient that we feel theſe emotions and pious ſatisfactions; we ought alſo to indulge them, and expreſs them by

ſome outward act and performance. Now, beſides the bare attendance on public worſhip, what can be ſo proper as the partaking of the Lord's ſupper, which, with great propriety, is always adminiſtered on this day? Conſider, it is the laſt ſacred office, and indeed the only one which he enjoined his diſciples to perform in honor of his memory. "This do," ſays he, on the eve of his departure from a cruel and wicked world, "in remembrance of me." There is ſurely nothing arduous or difficult in the performance of it; and the requeſt ought to be regarded with ſuch ſentiments of love and piety as nothing can equal, but the pleaſure and ſatisfaction of complying with it. We muſt not forget too that it is a neceſſary duty, which is incumbent on all Chriſtians; and when can we perform it, with greater propriety, than on the day of our Lord's nativity? Add to the expediency of celebrating this holy communion, that it ſeems to be the ſentiment of nature, and to proceed on other occaſions, ſomewhat ſimilar, from the genuine

nuine operations of the heart. Whenever we are endeared to any one in a particular manner, by the ties of nature or affection, we are wont to ſhew our pleaſure and ſatisfaction ariſing from the relation, by commemorating the day of their birth. Shall we then joyfully and regularly embrace the opportunities, as they offer, of celebrating the day that gave us a parent or a child, and ſhall we let the nativity of our bleſſed Lord and Redeemer paſs by unnoticed! Let gratitude, devotion, piety and duty forbid it! Independent alſo of every other motive, there is certainly great comfort in performing "this labor of love," in making a ſolemn and public profeſſion of our faith, at proper and ſtated intervals, in ſupplicating for mercy, and acknowledging the Son of God for our Saviour and our Lord.

THE preſent ſeaſon, in conſequence of the great event which diſtinguiſhes it, has long been dedicated to feſtivity and joy throughout the chriſtian world. To the greateſt heavenly bleſſings it is natural to unite the

comforts which this life affords; and if our pleaſures and enjoyments were regulated by the ſpirit of praiſe and thankſgiving to Him, "who is the giver of all good "gifts," there would be great propriety in them. But I fear, that the ſenſual indulgence which the occaſion offers, is too often admitted with eagerneſs, and the duties of the day wholly forgotten. To make ſo ſolemn a feſtival as the preſent,—a feſtival diſtinguiſhed by heaven's peculiar bounty and good-will to man, a pretence for idleneſs, for gluttony and intemperance, is an idea ſo groſs and impious, that it muſt ſtrike every ſober mind with indignation and abhorrence. We ſhould certainly feel the higheſt ſenſations of joy and ſatisfaction, but our rejoicing ought to be of the moſt exalted nature, as well as degree; very different from that noiſy and giddy mirth which generally ariſes in "the houſe of "feaſting;" it ſhould always be accompanied with acts of hoſpitality and kindneſs. While we feel and acknowledge the divine benevolence to us and to the whole world, we ought to imitate the glorious example,

example, as far as we have ability, by ſhewing our love to our fellow-creatures. Let our joy then ſpring from the nobleſt affections. Let it be influenced by gratitude to God and charity to man. Let it ſhew itſelf on all occaſions, but particularly the preſent, in the exerciſe of thoſe important duties of a chriſtian's profeſſion. Let us be ready to offer our alms and thankſgivings at the altar of the Lord, and contribute our mite with chearfulneſs, " to feed " the hungry and cloath the naked." To make our behaviour in every reſpect worthy of this great ſolemnity, and to inſpire diſpoſitions of mind ſuitable to it, let us remember, that " unto us a child is born, " unto us a ſon is given, whoſe name was " to be called Wonderful, Counſellor, the " mighty God, the everlaſting Father, the " Prince of Peace!" This is the day on which this grand and awful prophecy was fulfilled, and this is the day, on which the heavenly hoſt celebrated the event, by ſinging, " Glory to God in the higheſt, on " earth peace, good-will towards men!"

# SERMON XVIII.

1 TIM. iv. 12.

——*Let no man deſpiſe thy youth.*

IT appears from this paſſage that Timothy was but young, when his venerable brother, St. Paul, was by his admonition and inſtruction, qualifying him for a teacher of the holy goſpel. For an office ſo important, and at the ſame time ſo difficult, the ſeaſon of youth was by no means the beſt adapted. He was engaging in the propagation of a ſyſtem which required the utmoſt rectitude of conduct, joined to the moſt patient perſeverance, in order to oppoſe

poſe the vices and prejudices, and to ſupport the cruelty and oppreſſion, of a wicked and corrupted world. In proportion too, as the doctrines of the bleſſed Jeſus were diſtinguiſhed for their ſuperior excellence, the errors, and even the frailties, of thoſe who taught them became more conſpicuous; while, alſo, to the admonitions of the aged we are diſpoſed to liſten, as to truths that have received the ſanction of experience, we turn with indifference from what a younger teacher may have to offer, from a conviction that his early years ſubject him, at leaſt, to the imputation of ignorance, if not of vice. But the natural diſqualification of youth is not inſurmountable, ſince the precept of the text ſhews, that it is *poſſible* for a young man to be the inſtructor of others, and the rare example of Timothy proved it *practicable* alſo.

Not to dwell on the exemplary conduct, the ſhining talents, the ſteady virtues and the pure devotion which muſt have ſo eminently

eminently diſtinguiſhed this young apoſtle, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew what perfections of character are requiſite, not particularly in thoſe who have undertaken the laudable, though often ungrateful taſk of teaching others, but in young men in general, that "no man may deſpiſe their youth."

AMONG the good qualities of the young which firſt diſcover themſelves, and which we regard as the ſure indications of every thing excellent in morals, are a nice ſenſe of what is good and what is evil, what is truly praiſe-worthy, and what is not, with an early and earneſt attention to the forming of their principles. Thoſe, indeed, who from their inexperience, their juvenile ardor and want of reflection are often expoſed to the moſt dangerous temptations, cannot ſtore the mind too ſoon with thoſe maxims which are the ſafeguards of innocence, nor direct their attention too early to the acquiſition of thoſe habits of thinking, and that ſteadineſs of conduct, from which, when united with religion, every thing that

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is great, good and amiable muſt proceed. When embarked on the ocean of life, innumerable dangers will ſurround them, and various afflictions, under the ſpecious forms of pleaſure, will aſſail their hearts. To ruſh blindly on, in a courſe ſo perilous, without either the benefits of experience, or the guidance of wiſdom, muſt quickly lead to miſery and ruin. It is a duty, therefore, which we owe both to ourſelves, our neighbour and our God, when we firſt arrive at the years of diſcretion, and acquire the power of reflection, to "ponder the "path of life," and meditate on "the "race which is ſet before us," with the moſt ſtedfaſt and ſerious attention. Not to dwell, in this place, on the high commands of Heaven, that enjoin an early courſe of piety and virtue, as peculiarly acceptable to the Deity, we ſhould conſider that, at this critical age, the character takes its caſt, perhaps, for ever. The proneneſs of the human heart to evil, the violence of temptation, and the frail virtues of thoſe, who have nothing to boaſt of but good diſpoſitions,

diſpoſitions, are generally acknowledged in others, and ſometimes felt within ourſelves. No ſmall care, therefore, will be neceſſary to be negatively good, merely "to abſtain "from evil:" but to make any conſiderable advances towards perfection, the greateſt vigilance and caution, united with the beſt endeavours, under the holy diſcipline of our Redeemer's laws, are indiſpenſible, and therefore poſitively required. In this arduous enterprize, when we are preſſing on to the glorious mark of immortality, through difficulties and dangers, through the perplexing paths of ſorrow, and the more pleaſing, though no leſs bewildering fields of joy, to take the broad road that leads to deſtruction, at our firſt onſet, is dreadful and alarming. One falſe ſtep brings on another, till vice becomes habitual, and ruin inevitable; or ſhould the ſoul, rouſed by the awful admonitions of religion, ſhudder at the threatening proſpect, the return to virtue will be more difficult. Not only the frailties and evil propenſities inherent in the heart of man muſt be

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combated with patient fortitude and vigorous perſeverance, but the painful path of error muſt be trodden back; the ſneers of vicious companions muſt be diſregarded; the ſcoffing of fools deſpiſed, and the mind thoroughly cleanſed, if poſſible, from every impurity contracted during the habits of careleſs indifference or avowed wickedneſs.

WHILE ſuch conſiderations, among many others that might be adduced, ſhew the importance and neceſſity of ſubjecting the paſſions to the early diſcipline of virtue, and the whole heart and ſoul to the needful reſtraints of religion, we cannot but reflect on the too general neglect of this fundamental duty in young perſons, with pain and ſorrow. How often do we ſee them follow the giddy impetuoſity of their temper, without acknowledging any reſtraint that would curtail them of the moſt frivolous, and ſometimes the moſt vicious pleaſures! How often do we obſerve ſin eſtabliſhing her firm dominion over their hearts,

hearts, under the fallacious appearance of innocent indulgence, or harmleſs amuſements! And how often do we ſee a headſtrong temper, impatient of control, when it moſt needs it, burſt from the wholeſome reſtriction of paternal authority, and run into every irregularity, from the evil example of others, perhaps, or the dangerous "folly of truſting too much in their own "hearts!"

But to deſcend from general reflections to the diſcuſſion of a few particular ſubjects, permit me to obſerve, that too great confidence in our own ſtrength is always dangerous, and ſometimes fatal. In the catalogue of good qualities, therefore, which diſtinguiſh the young, we particularly expect to find that virtue which we term modeſty; but which the ſcripture comprehends under the diſtinct expreſſions of meekneſs, gentleneſs and ſelf-humiliation. There are ſufficient motives to enforce the obſervance of theſe chriſtian graces in men of all ages; but in youth

many additional conſiderations renderthem indiſpenſible duties. Thoſe who can have had but little time and leſs opportunity to gain any well-grounded information on important ſubjects; who are in continual danger of being miſled by their heat of temper, and often of being ſeduced from truth and virtue by the fantaſtic forms of novelty or faſhion; who to the want of experience are often forced to confeſs the want of reflection alſo, ſhould ſurely be on all occaſions ready to diſtruſt themſelves, and pay ſome deference to the ſentiments of others. This conſideration alone, if ſuffered to have its due weight, would caſt an amiable color over their whole behaviour, and kindle thoſe ingenuous bluſhes of ſhame, which, on proper occaſions, we all wiſh to ſee, and which we are all ſo ready to admire.

But modeſty in youth ſhould be a natural virtue; it ſhould be derived from other, more abundant ſources than mere reflection, or a ſenſe of propriety; it ſhould

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ſpring ſpontaneouſly from ſenſibility, from a heart alive to every ſentiment of ſhame before it has been hackneyed in the ways of men, or rendered callous by a long intercourſe with the world. They who can mix in every ſociety with equal eaſe, and expoſe themſelves to the imputation of impudence or ignorance without a bluſh; who can indulge the paltry temptation to licentious raillery, or indecent converſation, and give others pain, without feeling a portion of it themſelves, are either men to whom nature has denied every delicacy of ſentiment; or in whoſe minds, the emotions of ſhame have been ſo often excited, that they are no longer felt. For youth therefore to want modeſty is not only to want ſenſibility, but, in a great meaſure, all thoſe endearing qualities, with which it is ſo intimately blended. As for that artificial conſequence, and that boyiſh importance which ſome have been taught to acquire, in direct violence to nature, and the genuine dictates of the heart,

it is in young perſons always diſguſting, if not always vicious.

But in morals and religion, as in every thing elſe, there are certain boundaries, where truth and error, virtue and vice begin to blend, like light and darkneſs on the horizon of the globe. Hence it is in ſome meaſure neceſſary that the limits, at leaſt of every middle virtue (if I may ſo expreſs myſelf) ſhould be defined, that its nature may be better underſtood, and the extent of its obligation more fully known. Some may ſuppoſe that the cultivation of modeſty, as one of the characteriſtic virtues and chief ornaments of youth, is attended with a ſervile ſubmiſſion, that is both puſillanimous and degrading. Very far from it. True modeſty is as diſtinct from every thing that is abject and mean, as the magnanimity of a hero is from the bluſtering rage of a coward. It is only a becoming veil, thrown by nature over the good qualites of the mind, before they have reached

reached maturity, that they may appear at length in greater beauty and fuller perfection. And ſo far is modeſty from being incompatible with true dignity, that it forms no inconſiderable part of it. Aſſociated with good diſpoſitions, and ennobled by a ſenſe of conſcious worth, it becomes a virtue of the moſt exalted nature. Though we may be often witneſſes to a degree of aukward ſhame in the uncultivated minds of youth, that is extremely painful to others and embarraſſing to themſelves; yet we ſhould not forget that ſuch are the rude materials of virtue, which are the proper objects of cultivation; wherever we find them, we ſhould regard them as rough diamonds, that ſufficiently ſpeak their intrinſic value, and only require the artiſt's needful hand to ſhew them in their full luſtre. We may be aſſured that the lively ſenſe of ſhame, which often cauſes ſuch confuſion in the mind, is always an indication of good intentions, and a deſire of acting well in thoſe who feel it, if they only knew how. As for the wretch that bluſhes at the im-

purity of his own thoughts, that hangs his head from the conſciouſneſs of a mean and groveling diſpoſition, and walks as it were in darkneſs with the light of heaven around him, the emotions of his mind are more nearly allied to the overwhelming ſenſe of guilt than that amiable virtue which I wiſh at preſent to inculcate.

SUFFER me to cloſe theſe obſervations by recommending modeſty to youth, in its proper and enlarged ſenſe, not only as a duty, but as the chief ornament of the mind. Its importance, indeed, does not conſiſt immediately in itſelf, abſtractedly conſidered, ſo much as in the influence which it communicates, and the protection which it affords to other virtues. The meekneſs which the tenor of the holy goſpel throughout inculcates, and which the precepts and example of St. Paul ſo ſtrongly enforce, is of this nature; and is always mentioned as giving a grace, and adding an importance, to every benevolent action. Beſides, the emotions that ariſe from an ingenuous

genuous modeſty, will often make us ſhrink from temptation, and preſerve our hearts from the corruption of vice, when reflection and a regard to principle would prove ineffectual. United with a proper ſenſe of worth, and freed from falſe ſhame, it forms the moſt amiable prepoſſeſſion of character, and one of the moſt powerful attractions that a young perſon can poſſeſs. But though we wiſh to obſerve its influence on the whole conduct and behaviour of youth, yet we wiſh more particularly to ſee it regulate their intercourſe and govern their converſation with the aged. This intercourſe, indeed, as it is ſeldom cultivated from choice, is generally confined to the company of their parents; who are certainly entitled not only to all the reſpect that is due from modeſty, but all the deference that ſprings from duty, tenderneſs and natural affection. To ſee the leaſt ſymptoms of inſolence of manner, or coarſeneſs of behaviour, in a relation of life ſo intimate, and which ought, on both ſides, to be ſo endearing, is be-

yond meaſure ſhocking and diſguſting. Whatever vices ariſe from a brutal diſpoſition of mind, an unlimited indulgence of ſelfiſh paſſions, or a total want of tenderneſs and feeling, we might expect to find in one, who is capable of behaving ill to a father or a mother.

But let us now direct our attention to a ſubject of greater importance, and which more intimately concerns our innocence and peace. The wiſe and beneficent Creator of the world hath diſtinguiſhed his rational creatures by various intellectual endowments, which ſufficiently proclaim the ſuperiority of man over the reſt of the creation, and point him out as the peculiar object of moral diſcipline here, and of divine reward hereafter. We can boaſt, in an eminent degree, of the nice, diſcriminating faculties of thought, reaſon, conſcience and reflection, that were given us to aſcertain good from evil, and to diſcern, with ſufficient truth, the path that leads to virtue and happineſs. The paſſions alſo, which

which in the brute creation are little more than the inſtincts of their nature, were planted in our boſoms for the wiſeſt and beſt of purpoſes. By their ſalutary operation the current of life is prevented from ſtagnating. They give energy to our thoughts, and vigor to our purſuits. By their intermediate agency the knowledge of goodneſs is often aſſociated with the practice of it. To the ſentiments of virtue they communicate additional warmth, and when under due regulation, they add to our religious principles ſuch exaltation of mind as raiſes our thoughts above this world, and directs our attention to that "crown "of glory which fadeth not away," as the laſt, and moſt important object of all human hope. But while we aſcribe theſe and many other bleſſed effects to the influence of the paſſions, when under proper government, and due ſubordination to the guidance of reaſon, and the directing voice of religion, we muſt not forget that, from their perverſion and diſorder, ſprings vice

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of every kind, and miſery in every hideous and guilty form.

In youth, therefore, a ſeaſon when theſe great movers of the mind generally operate without any direction, but the blind impulſes of nature, and little control, but from their own counter-action; the government of the paſſions muſt form a duty of the laſt importance; a duty on which their happineſs or miſery not only in this world, but in that which is to come, will, in a great meaſure, be ſuſpended. Nor is this the ſentiment of reaſon only, but of revelation alſo; for there we are commanded to "keep the heart with all dili-"gence, for out of it are the iſſues of "life."

In endeavouring to recommend this important obligation both of virtue and religion, to the attention of young perſons, I ſhall not expatiate on that horrid depravity and perverſion of mind which lead to crimes

crimes of the deepeſt dye, and which actuate the perſecuting tyrant, the murderer or the felon; but will confine myſelf to ſuch propenſities as lead us almoſt inſenſibly to evil, and to ſuch frailties in the human boſom, as are often aſſociated with a beneficent temper and amiable diſpoſitions.

Among the more innocent exceſſes of youthful paſſions, and the leſs dangerous deluſions of the mind, we may rank the extravagancies of hope and expectation. Before we have had the painful but wholeſome leſſons of experience impreſſed upon our hearts, we view the ſcenes of life, through the deceitful medium of imagination with pure, unmixed delight; we look forward with eager joy to the hour that frees us from reſtraint, and brings with it the gratification of our wiſhes. Viſions of pleaſure ſport before our eyes, in a thouſand gay, fantaſtic forms; we anticipate the bliſs which is to come, and "rejoice to run our courſe." But theſe

pleaſing dreams of happineſs ſhould not be indulged too far; reaſon ſhould teach us, in our earlier years, that this world is a mixture of good and evil; a ſchool of needful diſcipline, in which we are trained up to the "high calling of Chriſt Jeſus," and formed to virtue by combating the ills, and enduring the afflictions of life. Were it poſſible, by arguments directed to the underſtanding, or ſentiments addreſſed to the heart, to communicate to others thoſe truths which are derived from experience and an enlarged ſtate of mind, ſuch reflections would often allay, if not prevent the miſeries of diſappointment, and youth would ſoon learn to know the vanity of human wiſhes.

But the loſs of ſome diſtant good, however heightened by the powers of imagination, or over-rated by the blind partiality of our hearts, is by no means the only, or moſt important evil, that ſprings from this vain exaltation of the mind. From being ſo long converſant with imaginary happineſs,

neſs, we loſe our reliſh for that which is real. Many are the comforts of life that will be diſregarded; inſtead of acknowledging with thankfulneſs the bleſſings which we already enjoy, we ſhall be apt to indulge the murmurs of diſcontent that we do not poſſeſs more. Thus will the diſorders of the imagination often encroach upon our religious duties, and make us forgetful of that all-gracious Being whoſe wiſdom and whoſe mercy ſhould, at all times, "fill our "hearts with food and gladneſs." The mind alſo ſoured with diſappointment, and irritated by repeated vexations, becomes incapable of ſharing in the ſocial intercourſes of life. The man whoſe whole attention is engroſſed by the imaginary cares and reſtleſs anxiety which agitate his own boſom, and ariſe from romantic wiſhes and ill-grounded expectations, is but ill-qualified to perform the offices of friendſhip, or to fulfil the mild duties of charity and benevolence. He feels too much for himſelf to be intereſted in the happineſs of others; and as he undervalues the common

mon bleſſings, ſo he overlooks the ordinary ills of life.

Such wandering wiſhes, and ſuch extravagancies of the mind, united with the giddy folly and inexperience of youth, firſt tend to diſappointment and chagrin; if not timely corrected by reflection and the ſacred admonitions of religion, they overwhelm the ſoul with miſery and diſcontent, and at lentgh terminate in the churliſh diſpoſitions of miſanthropy. Should theſe ardent, though ill-founded hopes, ever happen to be cheriſhed by fortunate events, or lucky accidents, they may produce a courſe of action, more pleaſing, indeed, but by no means leſs dangerous. Kindled into ambition, the diſorder is no longer confined within our own boſoms. Whatever obſtructs the progreſs of a paſſion, neither governed by religious motives, nor regulated by a regard to true virtue, muſt ſuffer by its violence. The man who is agitated by reſtleſs vanity, or wild deſires, if in an humble ſtation, generally ſcatters miſery through

through the ſmall circle of domeſtic life; what ſlaughter and deſtruction ambition has produced in kings and emperors, the hiſtorian of an Alexander, and the vain, though elegant commentaries of a Cæſar ſufficiently declare. To guard the heart, therefore, againſt theſe wild exceſſes of juvenile ardor is a duty to which youth ſhould direct their early attention, if they wiſh that the ſeaſon of life, which we are naturally diſpoſed to regard with indulgent affection, ſhould not be deſervedly deſpiſed, by incurring the imputation of folly and extravagance, vice and ſin.

At the ſame time that they ſhould take particular care to avoid the many falſe and artificial notions of life, which we are but too eager to embrace with blind credulity, and which, for that reaſon, indeed, the fanciful writers of romance are but too apt to communicate, they ought to acquire thoſe enlarged ideas of men and things, which have their foundation in truth; and

in

in ſome meaſure ſupply the want of experience by habits of thought and reflection. Above all, they ſhould have recourſe to the bleſſed goſpel of our Lord and Saviour, Chriſt, and deeply impreſs their hearts with thoſe divine truths which illumine the natural mind of man, as the rays of the ſun enlighten the globe. We ſhould there learn at every age, to reſt our hopes on a more laſting foundation than the enjoyments of this world, and to "place our affections on "things above." We ſhould there be taught that they who greedily long for riches and honours are often "pierced through with "many ſorrows; but that they who hun-"ger and thirſt after righteouſneſs ſhall "be filled." From the ſame bleſſed ſource of divine knowledge and heavenly comfort, we ſhould derive that contentment, which, when united with godlineſs, is the greateſt bleſſing we can poſſibly enjoy; a bleſſing which properly underſtood, and diligently improved, makes every comfort that meets us in the variegated paths of life felt at the

the heart; and to every inſtance of divine bounty, aſſociates the ſentiments of piety and the affections of gratitude.

WHAT I would next warn young perſons againſt, is an inordinate love of pleaſure. This is a frailty which in them we treat with ſome indulgence, as it proceeds from the ſtrong propenſities of nature. We can reflect, that the ſcenes of life have not yet, by frequent repetition, palled upon their ſenſes; that the lively ſenſations of delight, ariſing from early gratifications, are not yet much abated; that the world has yet many allurements to attract their attention; and that paſſion not only operates ſooner, but with greater efficacy than reaſon and reflection. But though we candidly admit theſe conſiderations as an excuſe, in ſome degree, for the inordinate love of pleaſure, yet they muſt by no means be urged as a juſtification of it. Inſtead of idle gratification and unlimited indulgence, the laws of nature, the plan of Providence, and the voice of reaſon have allotted to the early period of our exiſtence

duties, of all others the moſt important, and perhaps the moſt difficult to perform. In the very infancy of reaſon, when wiſdom begins to dawn upon our minds, we are directed to look forward to ſomething that is to come, and to prepare ourſelves, either in a more enlarged, or confined ſenſe, for a ſtate of futurity. And this we are taught not only from internal reflection, but from ſenſible objects alſo. The huſbandman, if he expects that his fields ſhould yield him fruit in autumn, muſt not let the ſpring, however pleaſing, paſs away without labor in idle enjoyments. If the ſhrub is to be formed to beauty, or the plant brought to perfection, the neceſſary care and cultivation muſt be beſtowed on them when they are young. Youth, therefore, is the time for labor, induſtry and improvement. To deſcend to particulars in order to illuſtrate the matter before us, at what ſeaſon of life ſhall we be likely to acquire knowledge, if we do not ſet about it when the painful ſenſe of ignorance is felt moſt ſenſibly, and when we have ſtrength, ſpirits and capacity

for toiling up the ſteeps of learning? When ſhall we endeavour to form our principles, if not at a time when to go wrong once is, perhaps, to continue ſo for ever; and when the good diſpoſitions of the heart are neither thwarted by obſtinate prejudices, nor corrupted by vicious habits? And when, when ſhall we cultivate the amiable duties and rational enjoyments of life, the pleaſing ſatisfactions of virtuous friendſhip, and the mutual endearments of relationſhip, if not at that period, when we are formed by nature for entering into theſe pleaſing obligations with ardor and affection, and when the ſanctions of reaſon and religion are ſtrengthened by the feelings of the heart? All theſe great and beneficial ends are notwithſtanding interrupted, and often neglected, from the immoderate love of pleaſure. Nor is it the cauſe only of negative evil, in checking the progreſs of virtue, and preventing the improvement of the mind; it ſeldom fails of bringing with it that which is poſitive alſo. Not to dwell particularly on the frequent

loſs of fortune, health and reputation, let me obſerve, that in the cup of pleaſure, vice generally mingles her ſubtileſt poiſon. The dranght becomes more palatable, it is true, but no leſs deſtructive. In the giddy hours of joyous feſtivity and noiſy mirth, we often are familiarized with moral impurity, under the diſguiſe of wit and humor, which the holy apoſtle meant to expreſs, by the moderate, though ſignificant terms, "filly talking and jeſting." Theſe are the moments in which the feeble outworks of virtue and religion (if there be any) are broken down, and the dominion of vice ſecretly eſtabliſhed. Often do our hearts, almoſt inſenſibly, receive the taint of corruption from the example and evil communications of others; from men who can aſſociate the moſt dangerous vices, perhaps, with the moſt pleaſing accompliſhments; who though wicked, diſſolute and abandoned, have not loſt the power of pleaſing; but who can recommend themſelves to our admiration by the brightneſs of their talents, and throw over every deformity

formity the ſplendid veil of genius. Such are the deluſive appearances in which "ſin "doth ſo eaſily beſet us," when we ſhould be ſhocked at the hideouſneſs of her naked form, and when, conſcious of our own integrity, we ſhould bluſh to be guilty of any thing that is mean, diſſolute or wicked.

We might eaſily proceed to enumerate a variety of irregular and dangerous indulgences which ſpring from a paſſion for pleaſure, were not ſome too groſs, and others too frivolous to be particularized in this place, and ſhew how often they tend to debaſe the underſtanding and corrupt the heart: But the obſervations which have been made on general topics may be eaſily applied to particulars; and thoſe who are not diſpoſed of themſelves to cultivate rectitude of conduct, both in morals and religion, from the reflection of their own minds, when once the fallacious appearances of vice are expoſed, and the paths of virtue laid open, are not likely to be pre-

vailed on either by the multiplied precepts, or the ſententious dogmas of others.

It will be urged, however, that frequent amuſement and relaxation are neceſſary to preſerve the health of the body. They are ſo. But the efficacy, the propriety, and even the innocence of theſe, as of every thing elſe, conſiſt in their moderation and a prudent choice. The fatigues of the ſtudent and ſedentary man require the needful refreſhments of exerciſe, and, perhaps, the occaſional enjoyment of innocent diverſions; ſuch, however, as do not familiarize ſpectacles of cruelty to animals, or leſſen the dignity of human nature, by repreſenting it in an odious and degrading light. There are, indeed, amuſements of an elegant and liberal caſt; ſuch as a cultivated mind may ſometimes indulge itſelf in, with pleaſure and advantage. What theſe are good ſenſe and a ſteady regard to virtue, even in hours of recreation, will point out to every one's taſte, with much

more

more propriety than another can do. As to the faſhionable pleaſures of the age (to ſpeak generally, and to uſe the mildeſt expreſſion) they can only be conſidered as a ſort of ſplendid idleneſs; or, to apply the bold antitheſis of an ancient, as wandering from place to place and ſearching after happineſs in "active ſloth."

SUFFER me to conclude by obſerving that every age and condition brings with it, beſides the ordinary obligations of virtue and religion, certain peculiar and appropriate duties; duties to which young perſons muſt diligently attend, if they wiſh that "no man ſhould deſpiſe their youth," and which the aged muſt duly cultivate and regularly practiſe, if they would have "the "hoary head found in the way of righteouſ-"neſs," and reverenced as "a crown of "glory." There are alſo a thouſand ſecondary graces of character, which muſt be ſtudied, and a thouſand indirect modes of temptation to be guarded againſt, if we wiſh to maintain reſpectability of charac-

ter, and to make any conſiderable advances towards perfection. The abſtaining from murder, adultery, abſolute theft, and wilful perjury, is only following the expreſs laws of nature, and complying with the poſitive inſtitutions of ſociety. It is only, in a religious ſenſe, treaſuring up the talent which was given us, and returning it, like the unprofitable ſervant, without addition or improvement. Much more will be required of us, as diſciples of the bleſſed Jeſus, in order to make us accepted of the Father. The duties of a chriſtian are not of a negative, but a poſitive nature. They require active benevolence, as well as an exemption from crimes. The preſumptuous Phariſee, you will remember, was not juſtified before God, though he faſted twice in a week, paid tithes of all that he poſſeſſed, and was neither an extortioner, an unjuſt man, or an adulterer. Nor was the Jewiſh ruler perfect, who told our Lord that he had kept the whole law of God, as expreſſed in the poſitive commandments of the ſecond table, even from his youth

youth up. He wanted one thing—charity, and active benevolence to man. In theſe the whole circle of the ſocial virtues are comprehended, in theſe the perfection of a chriſtian conſiſts, and theſe were wanting, it ſeems, to render him a diſciple of the bleſſed Jeſus and to ſecure his eternal ſalvation.

# SERMON XIX.

PSALM ciii. 14.

*For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are duſt.*

WHATEVER ſerves to withdraw our attention from ſenſual enjoyments and worldly purſuits, by fixing it on objects of higher importance, advances the dignity of human nature, and is a ſource of the pureſt felicity. The claims of the powerful and wealthy to ſuperior happineſs are often ill-founded, and their gratifications ſometimes ſpring wholly from vanity and pride. Even the more temperate

rate pleaſures, which reſult from the cultivation of ſcience and the ſportive creations of fancy, are not altogether without the mixture of human infirmity. They are, at beſt, but imperfect bleſſings, liable to be interrupted, if not deſtroyed, by a variety of accidents, and other comforts are always neceſſary to render the enjoyment of them permanent. But if there is in this world any felicity, which a rational and virtuous mind might deem perfect and free from every alloy, it is that which a chriſtian derives from theſe glorious and exalted truths; that we are here the probationary ſubjects of Divine Providence, that we are the children of God, and that "in him we live, and move and have our "being."

INSIGNIFICANT as a human creature might appear, when we conſider the wonders of the creation, the regions of infinite ſpace in which the heavenly bodies are continually performing their revolutions, and other glorious effects of the divine agency,

agency, we may be ſufficiently aſſured that not one individual is either overlooked or neglected in the immenſity of God's works. That omniſcience which "formed the hea-"vens, and laid the foundations of the "earth," can, at one glance, pervade all nature, and the Deity is, at all times, eſſentially preſent to every intellectual being. "When, therefore, we conſider the "heavens, the moon and ſtars, O Lord, "which thou haſt ordained," we might aſk, with David, "what is man that thou "art ſo mindful of him, and the ſon of "man that thou viſiteſt him?" But when we conſider the attributes of the Almighty Father, and that "he rejoiceth in the "works of his hands," we might be aſſured, that "he knoweth our down-ſitting "and our upriſing, and underſtandeth our "thoughts afar off." Not only the guilty wretch, who trembles at the rebuke of conſcience, but the righteous alſo, who have ſuffered their ſhare of ſorrow and calamity, during their ſojourning here may juſtly aſk, with the inſpired Pſalmiſt,

"Whither

" Whither ſhall I go from thy ſpirit? or " whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence?" The former might ſhrink with terror from the remembrance of his crimes, when he reflects that he lives and acts under the eye of an all-juſt and all-ſeeing God; the latter might dwell on the ſame thought with inexpreſſible pleaſure and ſatisfaction, as a ſource of comfort that can never be exhauſted, but becomes more abundant, as well as more delightful, in proportion as other bleſſings fade and die away. The pious man, far from regarding his Maker with terror and diſmay, has cauſe to look up to him with the greateſt confidence. When he addreſſes his prayers to heaven, the effuſions of his heart will ſpeak the language of peace, ſecurity and adoration. Though the ſnares of the wicked compaſs him round about, and the ſtorm of affliction falls heavily upon him, yet will he expreſs himſelf, when he pours out his ſoul to the Author of all being, in ſuch words as divine wiſdom hath inſpired. " My goodneſs, and my for-

" treſs;

"treſs; my high tower, and my deli-
"verer; my ſhield, and he in whom I
"truſt!" Theſe are the titles which, in moments of ſerious and devout meditation, as well as in the time of trouble, he will with grateful piety beſtow upon his Maker. Nothing can poſſibly ſerve to mitigate the anguiſh of ſorrow ſo effectually, and nothing can ſo much contribute to the excellence of human nature in this world as the belief that we are always under the ſuperintending care of the all-bountiful Creator of the univerſe, and enjoy the diſtinguiſhed privilege of looking up to him, for ſuccour and protection, in every difficulty and diſtreſs of life.

A DUE conſideration of this our relation to the Almighty, and our dependence on his mercies, will reconcile us alſo to the various afflictions which he might think it neceſſary for us to ſuffer. Provided we endeavour to keep our hearts as free as poſſible from the pollutions of ſin, by embracing, with thankfulneſs, the means which

which have been graciouſly afforded us of "growing wiſe unto ſalvation," what have we to fear while we journey through this vale of miſery and ſhadow of death? We are ſufficiently aſſured, that neither powers nor principalities, tribulation nor afflictions, can long ſeparate the righteous from Him, "in whoſe preſence there is fulneſs of joy." When, indeed, we reflect that we have omniſcience for our guide, and omnipotence for our defence, we might, in imitation of our bleſſed Lord's apoſtles, even "glory in our ſufferings." We might conſider them only as uſeful trials of virtue, and ſalutary exerciſes of the ſoul, in its progreſs towards perfection. Many are the divine comforts which reſult from conſidering ourſelves as the children of the Moſt High, in every ſituation of life, but chiefly in a ſtate of ſorrow and calamity. We may admit the neceſſity of difficulties and dangers, of temptation and trial in order to conſtitute a life of diſcipline. We might reflect, that our very griefs are ſometimes blended with ſuch ſatisfactions

as

as the more fortunate might envy; and believe, with adoration, that "they who "ſow in tears, ſhall reap in joy."

When once the affections are calmed by theſe pious and devout meditations, freſh ſources of comfort will alſo ſpring up in the mind. We ſhall conſider, in the firſt place, that the experience of ſorrow and calamity enlarges the bounds of that ineſtimable knowledge which teaches us how to live and how to die; that it gives us not only better, but juſter opinions of our fellow-creatures, and brings us acquainted with the nature of our own hearts. We ſhall be perſuaded, alſo, that it diſpels the airy viſions of fancy, and removes the veil of ignorance and ſelf-love; that it kindles the generous ſpark of ſympathy in our hearts, awakens, and perhaps creates, the mild and amiable virtues of candor, charity and benevolence; and that over the whole ſoul and diſpoſition it diffuſes a gentleneſs and complacency, which are ſcarcely to be derived from any

other ſource. Add to all this, that it produces in us habits of reflection, ſets us ſeriouſly about the important taſk of forming our principles, regulating our paſſions, and weaning our affections from the things of this world; to the exerciſes of devotion it gives additional fervor, and, by contraſting the vanities and vexations of all ſublunary enjoyments with the ſolid ſatisfactions of chriſtian piety, teaches us to look beyond this world, and build our happineſs chiefly on the mercy and the goodneſs of that all-gracious Being, "with "whom only true joy is to be found." From a knowledge that theſe are the ſalutary effects of ſorrow on the human mind, Solomon aſſerted, that "it is better to go "to the houſe of mourning, than to the "houſe of feaſting;" and that, "by the "ſadneſs of the countenance, the heart is "made better."

But beſides that this warfare is neceſſary to train us up to "the high calling of Chriſt "Jeſus," we may obſerve, that it is no leſs needful

needful to teach us the value of thoſe bleſſings which providence has conferred upon us in this life. The man who never experienced adverſity can hardly know how to fix a proper eſtimate on the proſperity which he might experience. Some ſhare of the former is as neceſſary to the true enjoyment of the latter, as the gloomy rigor of the winter is to render the return of ſpring more pleaſing. A thouſand comforts meet the proſperous in the circle of domeſtic life, which are diſregarded, or never remembered with gratitude; but which would notwithſtanding, fill the heart of one who has been acquainted with grief, with joy and ſatisfaction, "with food and gladneſs." Beſides, we may conſider the ſorrows of the virtuous as pledges of future happineſs. Perhaps, they might be even requiſite to the perfection of immortal bliſs. If we admit that the conſciouſneſs of our preſent ſtate is to exiſt hereafter, and there ſeems to be but little reaſon to ſuppoſe otherwiſe, we cannot but believe, that the poor, afflicted Lazarus, for inſtance, had

a fuller enjoyment of the bleſſedneſs of heaven, than if he had been "clothed in "purple," while on earth, "and fared "ſumptuouſly every day." However this may be, we are aſſured, from the whole tenor of the goſpel, that "virtue is made "perfect by ſuffering;" and that "they "who weep now, ſhall be comforted "hereafter."

FARTHER, when we conſider that "the "Great and lofty One who inhabiteth "eternity," is preſent alſo to the meaneſt wretch in creation, and "heareth all thoſe "who call upon him faithfully," we cannot be ſaid, in our afflictions, to be "like "thoſe who ſorrow without hope." He who in his tears, his lamentations and complaints, conſiders that the wiſeſt, the beſt and moſt powerful of Beings is privy to his ſufferings, watches over the anguiſh of his heart, and knows that he will ſo ordain the circumſtances of his life, that they ſhall all ultimately work together for good, will hardly envy the powerful or the

the wealthy, the proſperous or the proud, " who walk as it were in a vain ſhadow, " and diſquiet themſelves in vain, nor " know the things which pertain unto " their peace."

HAVING thus far ſpoken of the ſuperintendance of the Supreme Being over the fortunes of his intelligent creatures, let us now conſider him in that point of view in which the words of the text deſcribe him. As our wiſe and powerful, but kind and merciful judge. As one that will hereafter moſt aſſuredly bring us to judgment, and make manifeſt the hidden counſels of the heart, but yet as one " who knoweth " our frame, who remembereth that we " are duſt."

ON this important ſubject we are almoſt entirely indebted to divine revelation, for thoſe rational and comfortable truths in religion which we now enjoy. The fears and ſuperſtitions of unenlightened man, taught him to believe, that the Creator of

the world delighted in vengeance, and that the moſt rigid juſtice and inexorable power ſurrounded his throne. Sacrifice and oblation, with ſuch ineffectual prayers as the dangers, the ſucceſſes and calamities of this life prompted, were the only means that the wiſdom of man could deviſe for appeaſing his wrath, and removing the dreadful judgments of his incenſed Majeſty. Human reaſon ſeems to have been unable to gain even the elements of revelation in this particular. Seldom, or never, is the Almighty, repreſented "as long-ſuffering "and of great goodneſs, as forgiving ini-"quities, and crowning the repentant ſin-"ner with loving kindneſs and tender mer-"cies; as ſlow to anger, and pitying "thoſe that fear him, as a father pitieth "his children." The imagination of the heathen poet and philoſopher, delighted to paint him as the God that was armed with the thunberbolt of vengeance; as the awful, unrelenting power that conſigned all to the gloomy regions of Tartarus, that dared to tranſgreſs his commands,

mands, and that rejoiced more "in the "greatneſs of his might," than in the power of conferring happineſs, or relieving miſery.

Such notions, imperfect as they are in themſelves, were blended with abſurdities ſo groſs, and impurities ſo ſhocking, that we cannot be too thankful for that ſuperior light which has been vouchſafed us, in theſe latter times; in which "God, who "in divers manners ſpake," though not fully, "by the prophets, hath ſpoken to "us by his Son." The Almighty Father, indeed, whoſe attributes of wiſdom and of power ſo far tranſcend the faculties and conception of the human mind, could never be truly, or worthily conceived, by the aſſiſtance of reaſon, unenlightened by revelation. Loſt in uncertainty, and oppreſſed with the idea of a Being ſo awfully great, magnificent and powerful, we muſt ever have remained ignorant, or at leaſt doubtful, of the nature of his perfections, and the diſpenſations of his providence, if

we had not "acceſs to him through the "mediation of his only-begotten Son." From the gracious revelation of his will, manifeſted to us in the holy goſpel, we are aſſured, that "if any man ſin, we have "an advocate with the Father, Jeſus "Chriſt the righteous, and he is the "propitiation for our ſins." Though alſo after every earneſt endeavour we may come far ſhort of that life of holineſs, that godly ſimplicity and ſincerity, which are exhibited for our imitation in the life and converſation of Him, who was enabled to "fulfil "the will of his Father in all things;" though the beſt of us have abundant occaſion to ſay, when we ſum up the merit of our actions, and place them in oppoſition to our miſdeeds, that "we are unprofit-"able ſervants;" yet the words of the text inform us, that our heavenly Father "knoweth our frame, and remembereth "that we are duſt." Bleſſed truth! ſource of inexhauſtible comfort to poor, offending, as well as afflicted mortals, and truly worthy of Him, who is, indeed, "the God

"of

" of all comfort!" When torn by the conflict of contending paſſions, when ſurprized by ſudden and unexpected temptations, when betrayed from weakneſs, or miſled by ignorance, we tranſgreſs his high commands and violate the eternal laws of virtue and of truth, he mercifully forbears to bring ſudden deſtruction on us—" He " deſireth not the death of a ſinner, but " rather that he may turn from his wick- " edneſs and live"—ſtill he invites us into the arms of Divine mercy, " conſidereth " our frame, and remembereth that we " are duſt!"

From this diſtinguiſhed attribute of the Divine love, we derive further comfort and ſatisfaction in our intercourſe with the world. The omniſcient Creator that faſhioned us can penetrate into the inmoſt receſſes of the heart. He will always bear witneſs to thoſe good intentions which were fruſtrated, perhaps, by untoward accidents, or by the counteraction of ſome oppoſing principle of conduct. He can read

read and underſtand the wiſhes of ſincere benevolence, where the power of indulging them is wanting; and in thoſe complications of principle and paſſion, where the heart is divided in itſelf and hurried into dangerous exceſſes by the generous ardor of virtue, he will make due allowance for human infirmity, and "ſeeing our merits "in ſecret," however they may be concealed from others, "will reward them "openly." It is even poſſible that we might ſuffer in the opinion of the world, nay "be perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake," when our conduct is viewed with ſatisfaction and approbation by the Almighty Father of the univerſe. Benevolent actions directed to improper objects, and therefore unſucceſsful in their effects, will often be ſcandalized among men under the name of folly; and a few deviations in conduct from the eſtabliſhed practice of others, though ſuggeſted by the deſire of doing good, and maintained by the conſcioufneſs of virtue, might be magnified to errors, and, perhaps, to crimes. Let not this however

however prevent our continuance in well doing, convinced that there is One who at all times readeth our heart, and will judge righteous judgment.

THESE reflections are more particularly applicable to thoſe who ſtudy to follow the paths of chriſtian duty, regardleſs of the opinion of others, and careful only of maintaining "a conſcience void of offence "towards God and towards man." But let not the accommodating man of the world deceive himſelf ſo far, as to think that he is fulfilling the meaſure of his moral and religious duty, when he ſtrives, only from vanity and ſelf-love, perhaps, to conciliate the good-will of his fellow-creatures; but let him remember, that "the friendſhip "of the world is often enmity with God." By the dexterous arts of flattery and diſſimulation, reputation may, for a time, be upheld among men, and the mean affectation of the more amiable virtues, may be palmed upon the world for the virtues themſelves; but the triumph of hypocriſy and

and deception is but of ſhort duration, and every one who has the leaſt ſenſe of religion, or the moſt diſtant proſpect of another world, ſhould reflect, that as there is a God who ſees and will reward the hidden virtues and concealed graces of "the pure "in heart," ſo alſo the ſame omnipotent and omniſcient Being will puniſh the ſecret crimes of the wicked, unmaſk "the de-"ceitfulneſs of ſin," and cauſe "the hope "of the hypocrite to periſh."

WHILE we have thus endeavoured to explain the mercy and the goodneſs of God, as expreſſed in the beautiful words of the text, what are the practical improvements that we ſhould draw from them? Shall we be more negligent of our duty, and ſhall our hearts be leſs affected with gratitude, love and adoration, becauſe our God is a God of mercy? Shall our devotion be leſs fervent, and our piety not ſo ſteady, as it would have been, if under the Chriſtian diſpenſation the Deity had been repreſented as inexorable and vindictive, as he was in

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the looſe and corrupt ſyſtems of heathen mythology? In a word, to uſe the bold and expreſſive language of the apoſtle, "ſhall we ſin, that grace may abound?—"God forbid." But rather let our knowledge of the mercy and the goodneſs of God, exalt our religious practice to the higheſt degree of perfection. To all the motives that ariſe from the fear of incenſing omnipotence, let it ſuperadd the ſhame and remorſe, the ingratitude and guilt of offending infinite goodneſs and infinite perfection. To the more ordinary inducements for worſhipping the Father of all mercies, let it teach us to unite the moſt exalted and moſt pleaſing affections of which the ſoul is capable; love, gratitude, adoration and praiſe. To abuſe kindneſs, to be capable of perverting the wiſhes of benevolence, and fruſtrating the endeavours of diſintereſted friendſhip, is juſtly conſidered among mortals as a mark of the moſt depraved diſpoſition, and as a crime that merits general deteſtation. And ought we not to look upon ourſelves with much

greater

greater abhorrence, if we can ever be guilty of the ſame againſt the Lord and giver of life! againſt Him who is the ſource of all comfort, joy and ſatisfaction, both in this world and that which is to come!

LET us farther learn to imitate the divine benevolence, which has been the ſubject of our preſent meditation, in our commerce with the world. As the omnipotent Father, in his dealing with us, condeſcends to "remember that we are "duſt," let us alſo be ever ready to make all due allowance for the frailties of our fellow-creatures. Many are there in the world who, if they have fallen into errors which we have avoided, poſſeſs other good qualities to which we perhaps are ſtrangers. In forming our opinion of men and things, we have great need to exerciſe that "cha-"rity which is not eaſily provoked." We ſhould conſider the violence of temptation, and the frailty of our own hearts. Experience, perhaps, might teach us how ineffectual the efforts of virtue are, at all times,

times, to ſubdue the violence of paſſion, and to repel the attacks of vice. When we contemplate the ſtrange variety of wretchedneſs that ſurround us, and hear the melancholy hiſtory of thoſe who have been inſtrumental in bringing misfortune over their own heads, ſhould we condemn them all, without diſtinction, as guilty, or as deſerving our cenſure? Certainly not. If we conducted our enquiries, with charitable forbearance, into the nature and cauſes of their calamity, we ſhould find that ſome had been miſled by ignorance, or the folly of "truſting "too much in their own hearts," and many ſeduced from the paths of rectitude by temptations, which we ourſelves ſhould not have reſiſted, had chance or providence expoſed us to them. Others, again, have become the dupes of paſſions that originated from vanity and pride; vanity, that ſprung, perhaps, from the conſciouſneſs of excellence, and pride, eaſily excited, in weak minds, by the flattery and fawning ſubmiſſion of inferiors. We

ſhould perceive, alſo, that Providence, for purpoſes not ſufficiently apparent to human wiſdom, has expoſed ſome to the open world, and endowed them with excellencies that invite the attacks of malice, vice and envy, and ſhielded others from every ſhaft, either by making them too mean a mark, or by diſpoſing them in the peaceful habitations of ſolitude. On all occaſions, therefore, when we conſider that there is an unavoidable mixture of infirmity with every human virtue, we ſhall have abundant cauſe to reverence and obey the precept of the holy apoſtle, who exhorts us to "be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another even "as God, for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven "us."

WERE we, indeed, perfect creatures ourſelves, and the reſt of mankind only workers of iniquity, we might be permitted to aſſume the authority of judges; but ſinners as we all are, who can open his mouth to cenſure his neighbour, or ſlander his brother,

brother, without being ſtruck dumb, when he calls to mind that divine precept, "judge "not, that ye be not judged." Our bleſſed Redeemer enforced this admirable rule of conduct on various occaſions; but at no time more forcibly than when the Jews were going to ſtone the woman convicted of adultery to death. He did not urge any thing in extenuation of the crime, but in order to correct their eager zeal for executing juſtice here, ſaid, "he that is with-"out offence among you, let him firſt "caſt a ſtone at her." No one but the Great Jehovah to "whom all hearts are "open and all deſires are known, can judge "righteous judgment," and in every caſe, where the immediate peace of ſociety and the lives of individuals are not concerned, let the errors and imperfections of our fellow-mortals remain, for Him to puniſh or to pardon, as his unerring wiſdom ſhall direct. Man is often led into error by his ignorance or his infirmity, and frequently betrayed into guilt by the violence of his

paſſions. In no one can we expect to find juſtice, wiſdom and goodneſs in an infinite degree united, but in that Supreme Being "who knoweth our frame, and remem-"bereth that we are duſt."

THE END.

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